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The Strangers

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The Case of Vachel Lindsay

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Eliot's "Death By Water"

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CONTENTS

Katherine Anne Porter: *The Strangers* 211

Austin Warren: *The Case of Vachel Lindsay* 230

Mina Loy: *Ephemerid* 240

Richard Wilbur: *Cigales* 241

Grace 242

A Song 243

Ruth Lechlitner: *Hymenal* 244

Flannery O'Connor: *The Geranium* 245

David Cornel DeJong: From *A Roster of Fair Names* 254

Grover Smith: *Observations on Eliot's "Death by Water"* 257

Charles Child Walcutt: *Naturalism in 1946: Dreiser and Farrell* 263

Richmond Lattimore: *Three Poets from Across the Water* 268

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ACCENT

A QUARTERLY OF NEW LITERATURE

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KATHERINE ANNE PORTER:

The Strangers*

There being no Lutheran minister aboard, the Captain assumed leadership of the religious observances suitable to the day. At eleven o'clock all of the guests at his table except Dr. Sacher gathered in the main salon, and were joined there by Herr Johann Graf and his nephew, Herr Glocken and the Lutz family. The Captain read a few verses from the New Testament in his most commanding voice. His congregation bowed and listened respectfully to his prayer. Everybody joined in several hymns, their firm warm voices carrying all through the ship, even out to the bar, where the bar man stood listening thoughtfully, with a pleased face, nodding his head in time.

Frau Hutten, Frau Rittersdorf and Frau Schmitt retired to the shady side of the deck prepared to sit there in a row dutifully sunk in Sunday dullness, waiting for their dinner. Herr Professor Hutten joined in a conversation with the Captain and Dr. Sacher, a short distance away. Their voices were low and their manner earnest, so the women gave up trying to overhear, and Frau Hutten, observing that Frau Rittersdorf was writing in her notebook, kept a considerate silence, fumbling absently with Bébé's cropped ears.

"It seems that those young Americans," wrote Frau Rittersdorf, neatly, "have quite commonplace names, after all, Scott and Brown. Braun the name no

*A passage from *No Safe Harbor*, a novel in progress.

doubt was, and perhaps the young woman is of German origin, though I should detest thinking so. One more unGerman in every respect it would be difficult to imagine. Angel and Darling are their love-names for each other. In quite bad taste of course, and I think much exaggerated, as neither of them is in the slightest degree attractive. She is a dry thing like too many American women, even the beautiful ones have no real freshness, but seem either like painted wax or just on the point of fading. This is caused, I am told on good authority, by their almost universal habit of losing their virginity at a very early age, and thereafter leading lives of the utmost promiscuousness. But this young woman is not even beautiful. As for the young man, I suppose she is the best he can do for himself." She tucked her fountain pen in the narrow pocket on the back of the book, thinking she had well repaid that pair for misleading her in the first instance.

She turned to speak to Frau Hutten, when her attention was arrested by the behavior of Herr Rieber and Fräulein Spöckenkieker, engaged in some kind of scuffle at the rail. Herr Rieber was wearing the lady's green and white flowered scarf around his neck, and she was rather pulling him about by the ends. Frau Rittersdorf snapped her lorgnette upward for an instant. Yes, that girl was pretending gayly to tie a bow under Herr Rieber's chin, but she was really drawing the noose about his windpipe until he clutched for air and his beaming smile almost disappeared in a blue cloud of distended veins. She then loosened the knot, and the good-humored martyr went through a pantomime of coming to life again, gratefully.

His whole attitude was offensive to Frau Rittersdorf. It was unbecoming the dignity of a man to submit to amorous persecutions from any woman, no matter how irresistible her charms. More properly the other way about, for the crown of womanhood was suffering for the sake of love. A positive thrill of sensual excitement ran through Frau Rittersdorf's frame as she tried to imagine what would have happened if ever she had, no matter how playfully, attempted to strangle her Otto.

"Let us have some beer," shouted Herr Rieber gleefully, stuffing the scarf in his hip pocket where it dangled like a tail, and the shameless pair ran away, followed by a row of censorious glances. Frau Rittersdorf remarked to Frau Hutten, in a sweet charitable voice: "If one judged always by appearances, how often one would be obliged to think the worst."

Frau Hutten stirred lazily, and after a little reflection, answered with indulgence: "Ah, well, it seems that neither of them is married. Who knows, it may be a match."

Little Frau Otto Schmitt ventured: "They seem rather oddly matched. I always like to see the man taller than the woman."

The three then noted that Captain Thiele, Herr Professor Hutten and Doctor Sacher seemed still engrossed in their talk a safe distance away. They gave free rein to their womanly tongues without fear of being overheard by the men, to whom such talk must seem always trivial and unworthy.

"Fräulein Lizzi Spöckenkieker is a divorced woman, so I have heard," said

Frau Rittersdorf. "She is, I understand, a woman of business—a *lingerie* shop of sorts, and has kept her maiden name under all circumstances. No wonder she no longer has a husband. It also perhaps accounts for her manners, or lack of them."

"I wished to continue with my teaching after marriage," said Frau Hutten, with wifely pride, "but my husband would not hear of it for a moment. The husband supports the family, he told me, and the wife makes a happy home for them both. So it was."

Frau Schmitt blushed. "I taught," she said, "in the same school with my husband, but he was in poor health, almost an invalid, after the war. He could not carry a full professorship; it was important for him not to be too heavily burdened. But we had no children, what else should I have been doing? No, I was glad to help my husband. And we had a happy home as well." Her tone was gently defensive and self-satisfied.

"We can make no fixed rules, after all," said Frau Hutten. "Now, whatever life was like in that strange country, we are all going home at last. But it cannot be the same," she told Frau Rittersdorf. "Nothing can be the same. We went out to Mexico in 1912, foreseeing nothing of the disaster that was to overtake our poor country. Fortunately the Professor has very poor eyesight, and suffers from gallstones; there was never any question of him going to war . . . "

"Fortunately?" echoed Frau Rittersdorf, her arched eyebrows rising. "Fortunately, my husband was a perfect, a magnificent physical specimen of a man, a Captain, who saw three years' service at the front, in the very thick, I may say, of the battle. He received the Iron Cross, and was killed in action . . . is it not strange that war should destroy the brave, the sound in health, the valuable men, and leave only the defectives to carry on the race? Oh, I ask myself that question many times in the course of a year. I have found no satisfactory answer."

"The world needs scholars and thinkers as well as soldiers," said Frau Hutten, mildly. She was proof against this argument, being the sort of woman who admired intellectual attainments and bowed willingly to moral superiority. "But still I quite understand your feelings in the matter."

"My husband," said Frau Schmitt," was a brave soldier and a fine scholar, at once. These qualities are not incompatible. My husband . . . "

She stopped, drawing a long breath, which fetched up tears on its return as a pump from a well. Her face quivering, she felt blindly for her handkerchief. "No better than a dead man all those years," she said, choking, "a dead man all those long years."

The two women observed her emotion with composure and perhaps a slight tinge of satisfaction. Women must weep, each one her own tears for her own troubles, in her own time. But tearless themselves at the moment, their faces wore a faint expression of disapproval. Frau Schmitt appeared to be making rather a parade of grief, and they observed critically that, in spite of her widow's dress, she wore a heavy gold necklace; inappropriate, to say the least. In the rather prolonged silence, Frau Schmitt rose, her small nose and eyelids scarlet.

"Excuse me," she said. Balancing herself on her blunt-toed slippers, she edged around them and proceeded uncertainly towards the door. She paused there and stood aside, to make way for the sick old man in the wheel chair. Above the yellowed, parchment-covered skull the bright angry face of the young boy hovered, and rudely he attempted to crowd his way through the door almost before Frau Schmitt could get out of his path.

"Stop," said the sick man, in a hollow voice, holding up his hand, taking hold of Frau Schmitt's sleeve with finger and thumb. She trembled and dared not move as if a ghost had laid a hand upon her. "Are you in pain, my child?" he asked her. "Let me help you. Come, walk beside me and tell me your trouble."

"Oh, no, no," whispered Frau Schmitt, hurriedly. "It is nothing. Thank you, thank you so much. You are very kind."

"It is God who is kind through me, his instrument," said the sick man. "I, Johann Graf, can heal your sorrows by His grace if only you will believe . . . "

"Uncle," said the boy, hoarsely, "we are blocking the doorway." He shoved the chair forward violently, and Herr Graf's fingers still clinging slipped from Frau Schmitt's sleeve. "Oh *no,*" she said, hurrying by, her body clumsy in flight, "thank you. . . . " The shock of his blasphemous proposal dried her tears, her grief made way for a sound religious indignation, and a few minutes later she was talking earnestly to the Baumgartners, who had been sitting in a doleful solitude in the main salon. Herr Baumgartner was making a brief and losing fight against his longing for a brandy and soda before his dinner, and his wife was waiting stonily for the moment when he should admit defeat. Their son was kneeling on a chair at a window, watching the sea and waiting for his glass of raspberry juice. His mother would sit between him and his father, her head on her hand, and she would not let either of them out of her sight for a minute if she could help it. He wriggled and sighed, and watched Ric and Rac climbing to the top of the rail, leaning over, shouting to each other, wild and free. They saw him, and put out their tongues at him. Ric turned her back, flipped up her skirts and showed him the seat of her pants. He shrank down a little, behind the back of the chair. Frau Schmitt said to Frau Baumgartner, "Imagine a man on the edge of the grave. . . . " and Frau Baumgartner mentioned, almost shyly, that she herself had known persons, not always in the best of health themselves, who had the power of healing.

Frau Schmitt shook her head. "His face is not good. He frightened me with the look in his eyes."

Herr Baumgartner frowned with pain, groaned a little, and said, "There were saints in the old days who could heal the body as well as the soul."

"He is a Lutheran," said Frau Schmitt, impulsively, "how could he be a saint?"

Frau Baumgartner stiffened slightly, she spoke in a chilled tone. "We are Lutherans," she said. "We have our saints also."

"Oh dear," said Frau Schmitt, "please believe me when I say I would never

willingly offend the religious feeling of any one. I am sure I did not make myself clear."

"There are saints in every church," pursued Frau Baumgartner firmly, watching the lines of pain deepen in her husband's face. "Come Hans," she called to her child, putting an end to the struggle. With averted face she snubbed Frau Schmitt, and left her sitting there feeling deeply injured. Even with the best will in the world, with nothing but kindness in your heart, Frau Schmitt felt once more how difficult it is to be good and friendly and simple in a world where no one seems to understand or sympathize with another. It seemed to her at times that no one wished really to be charitable.

The Captain, in his talk with Herr Professor Hutten and Dr. Sacher, mentioned the trouble in the steerage that morning. He remarked easily that if there was any more disturbance, for any cause, he would lay the trouble makers in irons for the rest of the voyage. Dr. Sacher mentioned that he had heard one man had a broken nose, another a cut chin. On going down to see for himself, he had found them both getting on very well, he had put court plaster on the nose and had taken two stitches in the chin. Herr Professor Hutten was pained to hear the fight had been about religion. "Religion," said the Captain haughtily, "what do they know about that?" And they dismissed the matter. But Herr Professor Hutten thought it interesting enough to mention to his wife and Frau Rittersdorf. Meeting Arne Hansen on deck, Frau Rittersdorf made bold to ask him if he had heard any further details about the riot in the steerage. Hansen, being barely awake, had heard nothing, but he asked a sailor in passing, and the sailor told him it had been a pretty good fight, though short. He hadn't seen it, but he heard they drew knives.

Frau Hutten, airing Bébé, fell in with the Lutz family, and in some agitation told them what she had heard from her husband, or what she believed she had heard, and the Lutzes got the impression there had been a free-for-all scrimmage among dangerous criminals and much bloodshed.

Herr Lutz asked Herr Glocken, who was swinging along whistling a tuneless air, if he had heard of the battle in the steerage, and added his hope that their grievances might be settled justly, "or they'll be up here cutting all our throats," he said good-humoredly. Frau Lutz turned pale at such scandalous levity, and added as her personal opinion that it was probably a food riot: "Our own is not improving, you may have noticed," she remarked.

Herr Glocken was pleased to find that Wilhelm Freytag had not heard of the disturbance. "Odd," remarked Freytag, "I saw Dr. Sacher just a few minutes ago and he said nothing of such a thing." But he took a cheerful view. "So they are fighting down there already? Good," he said, "good. What about?"

Herr Glocken did not know. Opinion was divided. They drifted into the bar and heard Arne Hansen saying in English rather loudly and bitterly to the company assembled in a line on the high stools: "When they are all starving, and in rags being shipped like cattle from one place to another, can you guess what they find to fight about? Religion. My God. They give each other bloody

noses because one man kneels and another does not."

"Maybe religion is the only subject on which they have opinions," said Mrs. Treadwell, easily, whirling her stein of beer to make the foam rise again.

"Ach," said the purser, in distress, "please don't shake your beer. You will spoil it."

"Sorry," said Mrs. Treadwell, smiling at him.

Hansen leaned forward, his eyes glaring pale under his knotted brows. "Opinions? What opinions? Only the fat man has opinions, and what happens? The Captain says he is to be put in irons. So much for the right to opinion among those people."

"How could any one have an honest opinion about religion?" asked David, and Jenny noticed he spoke with a slight Spanish accent, one of his more irritating habits. "It is just prejudice against prejudice. The real basis of the religious question is political. . . ."

"Just so," boomed Hansen. "All is politics, who said otherwise? Who would care what a man's religion was if religion was not mixed with politics? Who would go to jail in this case? The man who is against religion. Why? Not because he does not like the church but because he does not like the government. The church and the government are like that!" He held up two fingers pressed together. "He could knock down altars all day and who would care? Nobody, if it was only a question of religion—" He turned his knotted frown upon Freytag as to some one he knew. "Isn't that so?"

Freytag said in a calm reasoning voice: 'Perhaps the man whose altar was knocked down might fight for pure religious reasons. His act might he useful to a political party, but his own feelings needn't have any political meaning at all. . . . I don't suppose either of those fellows could explain why they hit each other, but on one side at least I think it was something better than politics."

"Better?" asked Hansen. "You think it is better for religion to make dupes of those poor people so that they fight each other instead of fighting their enemies together?"

His indignation seemed real but its origins so mysterious to his listeners that no one answered him. The purser only clicked his tongue against his teeth several times and wagged a finger at him, shaking his big head with paternal gravity. Hansen ignored him.

Herr Baumgarten spoke up from his table, in a voice of deep emotion. "I am a lost soul, perhaps," he said, "but never would I deny the power of true religion. It is the spiritual source of our civilization. Poor as we may be now, what would we be without it?"

Hansen swung around and glared at Herr Baumgartner under his pale eyebrows. "Civilization," he said with blunt contempt, "let me tell you what it takes. First the soldier, then the priest, then the merchant. The merchant hires the soldier and the priest to open the way for him. First the soldier, he is a murderer, then the priest, he is a liar, then the merchant, he is a thief, and there you have your civilization. So." Herr Baumgartner flinched and closed his eyes, his wife set her lips and nudged him with her toe, warningly.

"What about the artist?" asked Jenny. "What about him?"

"He comes last, he pretends everything is what it is not, he is a fake," said Hansen, simply, without looking at her. Denny, sitting next to Lowenthal, had been very gloomy during this brief exposition of Hansen's views. He now seemed to understand what was said, and burst into a loud laugh. Nobody laughed with him. He lapsed into red-faced confusion. "Fakes, ha, that's right," he said, sneering elaborately.

"I'd like to see what is really going on," said Jenny to Freytag, who had been watching her face. "I think if the fat man is in the brig we ought to picket the Captain and carry banners and make a big day of it. . . ."

Freytag followed her, and they watched the people in the steerage for a while, but there was nothing happening beyond the ordinary. Men lolled and played cards on the floor, women nursed their babies, the hot sunlight poured over them, there were no signs of uneasiness.

At the other end of the ship, they found the Lutz family, the Huttens, the Spanish students, and Herr Glocken in a row looking down into the pit, where the canvas covering had been removed from the grating to give light and air to the quarters where the steerage passengers ate. The first table was already spread, a reassuring sight. Thick as flies the people were clustered around huge slabs of boiled ox-brisket, dumplings, bowls of cooked apricots, piles of fresh green onion. They fed in devoted silence, reaching out long arms for the chunks of bread scattered along the white oilcloth. They leaned on their elbows and ate, feeling their strength return, feeling their blood and bones renewing themselves, their hopes returning, their desire to live rousing from sleep again. The six students lined up and shouted something friendly and barbarous in their unfathomable argot; several of the men turned their faces up, mouths full, and jerked a hand upward, good-humoredly. They were sunken, hardened faces, but their eyes were the eyes of tired men who had slept and eaten. . . .

The sightseers moved on, their eased minds reflected in their faces. Murmuring among themselves at random, they were all vaguely agreed that to mistreat the poor is not right, and they were happy to have their charitable feelings soothed, their anxieties allayed. Those strange people did not appear to be dangerous; they were not being mistreated at all, they were having a very good dinner; and if mischief-makers were down there, the Captain would know how to quell them.

Jenny and Freytag lingered, some distance apart, then moved closer and stood together, their hands almost touching on the rail. Last night's absurd scene was between them, and David Scott might appear at any moment back of them, confirming his suspicions of their guilty intentions. Freytag's belief in his own innocence took the form of an obscure resentment against Jenny: why did she allow the fellow to behave in such a way, when he so obviously had no rights over her except as she chose to allow? Could she be in love with him? It seemed very improbable.

Jenny, leaning far over, searched among the crowd in the shadowy grated

pit. "Yes, there he is," she said, pointing out the fat man, who had changed to a grass-green shirt, "eating away. Not in the brig at all. So our parade is off." Her manner was completely candid, her eyes very clear and gay. "No injustice has been done, isn't that a shame?"

"There is injustice, all right," said Freytag, "but it lies far back and deep down. It wouldn't have done any good to picket the Captain."

"Oh, wouldn't it?" cried Jenny. She disagreed with him altogether. If you waited to get to the root you would never get anywhere. If you wanted things changed, you kicked over the nearest apple cart, spilled the first available bag of beans. She believed warmly and excitedly in strikes, she had been in them, they worked. She had picketed dozens of times with just any strikers who happened to need pickets, and she had been in jail several times. Not for long, though. Out on bail and back to the picket line. She had never held with those hotheads who advised her to bite policemen and kick them in the shins. She was glad to say she had got on very amiably with her policemen. She always made conversation and tried to convert them on the way to the station.

She might have been a very young girl telling about her first big party. Freytag could not take her seriously. She did not say where or when these things happened, or precisely how she had got involved, or what her beliefs were that led her to such actions. Her light running talk was full of omissions and pauses which apparently she expected him to fill in from his own knowledge of such things. He knew nothing whatever about them. Her face was full of light when she talked, in a tone of excitement and intimacy that belonged better to love. . . . He listened, not for what she was saying, for it seemed either childish nonsense or repellently hard and careless, he could not decide which; but she was full of feminine gentleness in her little person, harmoniously modeled and full of sweetness. He realized suddenly with acute dismay that she seemed beautiful to him, and he remembered instantly that on first sight she had certainly struck him as nothing out of the ordinary. He shuddered. Out of his past, out of his restless youth before he knew Mary, there rose suddenly a half dozen faces, dimmed and almost forgotten—none of them beautiful to him before he loved them, none of them beautiful since, some of them repulsive, even, but unbelievably enchanting for that brief time when he was hot after them, bedeviled and blinded with illusion. It was always love and it was always going to last forever. . . .

He moved away from her abruptly and, frowning a little, leaned on his folded arms and watched the people below. They were milling about, replacing each other at the tables; great heaps of dirty plates were being taken away, the platters of food were being thumped down again on the oilcloth. Jenny's face was a little dulled with melancholy. Amparo and Pepe, with sulky morning faces, paused for a glance into the pit, another glance of calculated insolence at Jenny and Freytag, and passed on, their narrow behinds swaying gracefully.

"Wasn't Hansen funny in the bar just now?" asked Jenny. "All animals are sad after making love."

"Except women and mares," said Freytag.

"I don't know about mares," said Jenny, "but it seems to make Hansen angry."

"He's an extreme character," said Freytag. "Something is troubling him. He groans and shouts at night and gets into fearful fights with some enemy who attacks him in that upper bunk."

"A political enemy no doubt," said Jenny. She enjoyed looking at Freytag, he was a delight to the eye. She liked his harmless dandyism; every man she had ever liked except David had been beautiful and vain as the devil. It had been her ruin, she decided. If a man were sufficiently good-looking she granted him all desirable qualities without question. Freytag was almost too handsome to draw. David had a much more interesting face, really. Or had he? A clinical abstract expression dawned in her eye: she wanted to see the bones. "What are you looking at?" asked Freytag uneasily, and barely restrained himself from running his hand over his hair, pulling at his necktie.

"At your head," said Jenny. "I like your head, maybe you would let me draw it." It might mean a few pleasant hours sitting about on deck, she'd like to see David try to make a scene about that.

"Of course I would," said Freytag, "but—"

"Nothing would happen," she said, confidently. Then she took the plunge: "I don't understand David at all," she told him. "I never pretended to, and he is always surprising me by some new glimpse of him. Nearly always when he is drinking. And there is a certain kind of truth in drunkenness. I know that what I do and say when I am drunk is just as true as the other different things I do and say when I am sober."

"Do you get drunk?" said Freytag, "You seem a very sober person to me."

"I am sober, even when I'm drunk," she said, anxiously. "It's always by accident and just for fun. But I am apt to tell a kind of truth I'd have sense enough to conceal other times. So I think David does too."

David gives himself away, she thought. That is what I am saying. And the next step is to apologize for him. Explain that he is really not that sort of person. That is not at all the kind of thing he usually does. He is ever so much nicer than you might think from what you have seen of him. He's had a terrible kind of life and has to work harder than most people to keep his balance. You must know him pretty well before you can see his true qualities clearly. I do know him well and when I say I don't understand him it's because I am ashamed for him and for me about what happened last night. It was the least important part of David who did that. I know a great deal more about him, I know some lovely things, I love him. Shameful, shameful.

"When you are in love," she said, "it is almost impossible to make yourself see straight, isn't it?"

"Love," said Freytag, speculatively, giving the word just so much weight and no more. The nape of her neck was very white and exposed-looking as she turned away her head, but she listened attentively when he talked about love, boasting a little, perhaps. He believed that love was based on faith, complete

loyalty was its first attribute. Far from being blind, love made one see clearly perhaps for the first time. Any smallest betrayal of the loved one, whether the act came early or late, was total betrayal from the first, and it destroyed not only the future but the very past itself, for every day lived in confidence had been a lie and the heart a dupe. To be unfaithful even once was never to have been faithful at all. Love, he told her, as if he were talking to himself, was a benevolent passion: full of loving kindness and fostering tenderness, faithful not by choice but by nature, hardy and lasting, full of courage. Flowers crept into his sentences, life and death were mentioned, bread and wine, and the perpetual recurrence of hopeful mornings with no evil memories and no disgust. Jenny listened as if hypnotized. The dreamy voice was soothing as a cradle song, a song her own wishful deluded heart sang to itself, it mingled with the soft dance of light on water and the fresh wind on her face. She heard a strange voice echoing not her thoughts but her feelings. They seemed sick and sentimental and false. At the last word her eyes flared open, and she cut through his maunderings.

"I think it is a death trap," she said with quiet violence. "I hate it and I always did. But I keep falling into it just the same."

"With all the wrong people," he said, flatly, smiling, "and what you fall into isn't love."

"I know, I know," said Jenny, with tolerance, "it's only sex, you'll be telling me next. How do you manage to keep them separated?"

"Why, I don't," said Freytag, a little indignantly, "I don't at all. It never occurred to me."

"I don't know what I fall into, then," said Jenny, and her face was pale, woebegone, no sparkle or warmth at all, "only that it comes to no good and it could be love."

The word fell softly between them and chimed in them both. "It could be," agreed Freytag, gently, after a moment. As for loyalty, thought Jenny, you shouldn't be talking about love to a strange woman on shipboard. Your wife wouldn't like it. It's the narrow wedge. That's one thing about David. He'll never be mooning about love to any other woman. He won't even talk about it to me. David hates love worse than I do, even. You've got a roving eye and a sidelong approach. If you belonged to me I wouldn't trust you around the corner. I can always trust David. David is going to be mean and tough and stubborn and faithful to death. We aren't going to kill each other because I mean to get away before that happens. But we'll leave dents in each other. When I get through with David he'll know the difference between me and the next woman—and I'll be carrying David in me like a petrified foetus for the rest of my life. She felt empty and ill and tired enough to lie down.

"Love," she remarked, wrinkling her nose, "this ship is simmering with it. I'm sure it's all love. I must go," she said. "Elsa's in love too, and I promised to help her fix her hair in a new way."

Alone, Freytag regretted what he had said to her; she was rather plainly laughing at him, he believed. No doubt she thought him a little soft-headed.

But she might have been lovely before she was maimed and perverted by her disordered life, her false notions of love and reckless waste of feeling. He had known girls like her before, wild and lost and lonely, full of distrust, letting him approach with a wary look in their eyes as if they would dash away before he could touch them. Their waywardness and lack of scruples had freed him from any sense of responsibility to them, they had asked for nothing of him, and had left him to enjoy a feeling of pity and tenderness for them. But that was all in the past. Such follies as Jenny belonged to his other life, and he knew what they were worth, compared to what his marriage had given him. He was certain that he was the most single-hearted and faithful of men, he had needed only to find Mary and he had found her. They had been separated for three months, and his body was uneasy, desirous, it was a bad sign when he began feeling sentimental about the first available woman who crossed his path in an unlucky moment. What was he thinking about? He brought himself up short; a slight uncomfortable twinge—was it guilt?—went over him, almost a tremor of the nerves. Then he diagnosed his own case rather coolly, and decided it was altogether normal, natural, nothing to worry about. Idleness, preoccupation, too long an absence from his wife,—altogether, not a promising situation, but it would end. A wave of bitter homesickness washed over him. After dinner he would read Mary's letters again.

The Cuban students had become a hermetic society, with ritual greetings, secret hand-grips which when applied properly wrung responsive yells of facetious anguish from the initiates, and a jargon so recondite they referred constantly in talk to small typewritten code sheets. They engaged in what appeared to be long and learned debates, carried on with farcical solemnity, always where they might be seen, but they kept their voices low and did not share their secrets with their rather bored audiences. It became known that they called themselves Les Camelots de la Cucaracha, and they published on the ship's press every morning six copies of a newspaper bearing in highly visible type the name, El Pi-Pi Diario. Midmorning they were seen going into the Countess' stateroom, and coming out again, and in the small writing room off the bar, they held a meeting and elected the Countess President, or Cockroach Extraordinary. Dr. Sacher, who was sitting outside the window, thought nothing could have been more lewd and disrespectful than their manner of talking about her. They believed her to be insane, that was clear, and an object of their monkeyish ridicule. But why they chose to expend their youthful high spirits upon her the doctor could not understand. Above all, why should she let herself be made a figure of fun by these peculiarly crass young men?

Upon her appearance in the dining room, they rose as one, bowed, and escorted her to their own table. Her chair was brought, and she sat among them with an elegant manner, and, Dr. Sacher thought, a slightly distracted smile. He observed her closely while she read their no doubt foul little newspaper, and she laughed most unbecomingly, showing gold teeth in the back. Taking first the student on her right, then on her left, by the head, she

whispered things in their ears that set them off with shouts of applause. Her hands flew then to her own breasts and she stroked them up and down, her face pained and thoughtful. No doubt she had reserved for herself a third flask of ether, and perhaps a fourth, Dr. Sacher concluded with resignation.

Captain Thiele, whose standards of behavior for the nobility were of astronomical heights, viewed with pinched mouth and beady eyes the frivolous conduct of his distinguished prisoner. She glanced his way, fluttered her fingers at him and at Dr. Sacher, who returned the salute gravely. Captain Thiele was suffering from indigestion brought on by frustration of his natural sense of authority. Upon hearing of the disturbance in the steerage his first impulse had been to order all the participants instantly confined for the rest of the voyage. He had received the deported workers as so many head of cattle and to find them daring in the very beginning of the voyage to assert themselves with insolence was not to be put up with for an instant. Father Carillo had talked to him, in abominable German, as if the fight were not just an ordinary one, he mentioned several times such terms as syndicalism, anarchism, republicanism, communism, besides atheism, and seemed very instructed in the fine shades of opinion existing among the rabble on the lower deck. According to Father Carillo, there was a great number of subversive and dangerous elements present which should be watched carefully, not only for the sake of the first class passengers, the crew, the ship herself, but for the protection of the innocent poor below, those good and harmless people who wished only to be allowed to obey the law and practise their religion in peace. The Teneriffans, for example, were mostly decent pious people. The trouble would be found among the Asturians and the Andalucians, between whom there existed old enmities, and he, Father Carillo, was not surprised to discover that the anti-religious faction consisted almost altogether of Asturians. They were, then, the ones to watch. The Captain was divided, for he loathed Catholics on principle, he was violently prejudiced against Spaniards, and he felt it beneath his dignity to admit any human importance to the doings of the people in the steerage. He thanked Father Carillo for his visit, promised to order a general tightening of discipline, used his favorite phrase about laying in irons the next offender against the peace, and very shortly afterward his breakfast began to disagree with him. The real trouble was, in the heavily overcrowded condition of the ship, there was no place to confine malcontents, especially if they were so numerous and so slyly threatening as Father Carillo seemed to say. In case of outright revolt, it was possible the crew was not sufficient to control them. Suppose they should seize such small arms as were in the hold, what then? The Captain, who had spent his life, except for the interval of the war, in the comparative calm of merchant and passenger ships, had a riotous and violent imagination which now took possession of him. He dreamed for a brief moment of a cinematic crisis full of darkness, hand to hand struggle, flashes of light and thunderous explosions, broken heads and pools of blood, shouts and incendiary flames, with life boats being lowered away into a heaving sea, and himself still on the bridge somehow in command of the situation. Before actually leaving the bridge, however, in

the present broad light of peaceful day, he gave a hasty order that every man in the steerage was to be searched for weapons however insignificant, and all were to be confiscated for the duration of the voyage. This done he felt restored somewhat, and in spite of his gas pains, was able to speak of the morning's incident with becoming casualness to Herr Professor Hutten and Dr. Sacher. They had disappointed him by accepting his manner at its face value, and seemed to think the affair of very little importance.

His mood of disapprobation shifted from the Countess. She was after all not to be blamed so much, since she was a lady in bad health and in a situation highly unsuitable to her caste. However, her very presence on board in such circumstances was a serious symptom of the disorder abroad in the world. Dimly her conduct reflected upon his authority as much as the impudent brawling among the steerage passengers. He was not thinking only of himself; a deviation from routine, a threat to his established rule, was not merely a personal affair. As Captain he belonged to a larger plan, he fulfilled his destiny in his appointed place as representative of the higher law, if he failed in his duty the whole structure of society would be weakened by so much.

He gazed fretfully, his underlip pouted, at the complacent faces gathered around his board. Herr Freytag: who was he? A man who looked upon a ship as a conveyance meant solely to get him safely from one port to another. Herr Rieber: the same. Herr Professor Hutten was a man of learning, but what could a professor know of the stern realities of the sea? In spite of his profound respect for Dr. Sacher, he had felt more than once that the doctor had no real understanding of the discipline necessary on a ship, no genuine regard for rank. There were times when the doctor seemed merely to be on a sea voyage for his own health. It was true that except for his heart, he would never have shipped as doctor, but still: when he returned from the steerage that morning, the doctor had almost ignored the disturbance, but had mentioned that during the night two women had had babies on the bare deck, and that he had arranged for them to have bunks in the same cabin. It showed a lack of proportion in his mind, an indifference to serious things.

Of the women he expected nothing, but their low-voiced babble among themselves annoyed him. Little Frau Schmitt was leaning over and talking across Herr Rieber to Lizzi, while Frau Rittersdorf and Frau Hutten leaned toward her from their side of the table; Frau Hutten was shaking her head sadly. The Captain pretended to attack his dinner, but he was hot with irritation and his vitals were stabbing him cruelly.

Frau Schmitt's grief had dried up somewhat after her experience with Herr Graf and her unlucky encounter with the Baumgartners; she wandered out on deck and paused idly, as every one did sooner or later during the day, to observe the strange life going on in the steerage. She found herself near the reserved-looking young American, Herr David Scott, also leaning on his elbows with his collar hunched up around his ears. Her eye was attracted to a sad sight. A man, very bony and ragged, perhaps young, but it was hard to tell, with his tousled hair on end, was sitting, back to the rail, his knees drawn up and his

bare toes curling and uncurling with sorrow; he was crying openly and bitterly like a child. He wept and scrubbed his eyes with his fists, his mouth was distorted like a howling dog's, and at his feet were several small objects, Frau Schmitt could not make out what they were. The other people paid no attention to him, they sat near him with stony indifferent faces. Men stood in groups with their backs turned, women almost stepped on him going about their own concerns. He seemed completely alone in the world; there is nothing like trouble to divide the human heart from you, thought Frau Schmitt, her own heart swelling with tears once more, but this time softer and gentler tears, because they were shed for another's pain.

She spoke gently to the listening women.

"So I said to the young man, Oh, wouldn't you think at least some one of them would speak to him? They might ask him what is the matter. The young American then said to me, They know already what is the matter; why should they ask? And then it seemed there had been an order, from whom I do not know, and the officers went among the men and took away their knives and such little tools as they had, and this poor man is a wood carver." Frau Schmitt, deep in her story, raised her voice a little, almost forgetting her natural timidity, and the Captain sat up sharply listening with a gathering frown. "Well, he was carving small animals from bits of wood he had brought in his bundle, hoping to sell them to people in first class. And when the officer asked him for his knife, he somehow thought he was lending it and would be given it back in a few minutes. Think of that. The young man told me all. He had seen and heard. He was very angry. Gone then were the hopes of that man, gone his happy occupation and his little knife, and so he cried, he cried like a baby."

Frau Schmitt's sensibilities almost overcame her again. She sat back and put her napkin to her mouth.

Frau Hutten clucked softly, deprecatingly. Lizzi said in a high babyish voice, "Oh, I don't think that was very nice, taking the poor little man's property away from him. Make them give it back, Captain?" Her long arm reached forth and she struck him lightly on the sleeve with the flat of her hand. The Captain did not respond with the charmed gallantry she had expected. His wattles grew scarlet, he bridled until his chin backed into his collar, and he gave Frau Schmitt a truly awful glare. The perfect victim of his wrath had been delivered into his hands and he proceeded to make an example of her.

"I am very sorry, Ladies," he said, in a voice of blistering courtesy, and his glance took them all in, their unbalanced female emotions, their shallow minds, their hopeless credulity. "Very sorry indeed to distress your kind hearts, but I myself gave the order for the disarming of the deportees. I trust you will believe me when I say that all my acts are governed by a knowledge of the true situation regardless of sentimental considerations. In the end I alone am answerable for your safety, do allow me to advise you that I act from the gravest motives of responsibility. A little discretion, please, dear Lady," he added sternly to Frau Schmitt, "at least do us the favor not to listen to the gossip and prejudices of foreigners, who naturally are anxious to put the worst possible light on things.

Or if you must listen, above all do not repeat it."

This unexpected climax to a trying morning crushed Frau Schmitt. She bowed her head, her shoulders drooped, a blush mounted slowly, painfully, from neck to forehead, her hands lay beside her plate and she seemed unable to lift them. From under her eyebrows she saw Frau Rittersdorf's sweet, satisfied smile.

The ship's orchestra did not play in the morning, but after dinner the elevating strains of Wagner and Schubert filled the salon where the Baumgartners, the Lutzes, the Huttens, in a word the more respectable element, settled down to the relaxation of cards, dominoes and chess. The Countess disappeared, and later the students could be heard shouting first at the shuffle board and then in the pool. Mingled with the strains of the orchestra came a harsher music. The Zarzuela company had brought out a small gramophone on deck, and a sharp soprano was raised in urgent obsessive complaint, accompanied by the insinuating clack and whine of outlandish instruments. They danced together, clicking their heels and snapping their fingers resonantly, revolving about each other with the grace of birds in a mating dance, but with cold professional faces. They stopped the music, talked among themselves bitterly for a few minutes, began again, watching each other sharply. Ric and Rac joined in, facing each other with narrowed eyes and bared teeth, their small thigh bones strangely agitated; at intervals they stamped and screamed at each other, their faces almost touching. Then all but Lola sank gracefully to the deck in a group, and Lola, the star, began a slow beautiful dance which no one interrupted.

"Olé, olé, viva tu madre," they cried rhythmically, clapping their hands as Lola's undulating skirts almost brushed their heads. The Cuban students came up out of the pool, reluctantly the Germans left their games, sailors appeared with an air of being there on duty, all were drawn irresistibly to the charming scene. Lola danced, grandly and severely, her features fixed in the classic erotic-frowning smile, which fetched forth ritual amorous groans from the males of her assisting company. At her last roulade of clicking heels, the others sprang up, and, the rehearsal over, they danced in pairs as if for pleasure, but with no pleasure in their faces, and they ignored their watchers with well rehearsed contempt.

Elsa, with her hair in a roll on top of her head, which made her look older, and broader in the cheeks, averted her eyes suddenly and took a step backward as if she would hide behind her parents. Excited by the dancing her face had fallen into an empty, happy smile; then she saw her student, with only black bathing trunks concealing his nakedness, take one of the Spanish girls about the waist and begin dancing with her. Her modesty suffered a shock which caused real pain at the center of her body; it rippled out in hot waves to her very finger tips. She closed her eyes and saw clearly in darkness what she refused to see by daylight: the flexing muscles of his back, the thin ribs, the long

legs with bony knees, the long arms embracing that girl they called Concha, her body limp against his naked chest. No, she could not bear it. "Mama, mama," she whimpered. "Mama, please, let's go inside."

"Are you ill, Elsa?" asked her mother. "Is there anything wrong with you?"

"No, no," said Elsa, in an oppressed, patient voice. "The sun is so hot."

"I give you until tomorrow," said her mother firmly, "until tomorrow to be in better spirits, and then I shall give you a good purge. That is what you need. Here on this ship, the lack of exercise, the indigestible food,—yes I could have a headache myself, easily. A good purge, that is what you need. But now control yourself, and come finish the dominoes with your father. As to your hair, Elsa, I don't like it so. Tomorrow you must put it back in the old way. And never change it again without asking me."

"Yes, mama," she said, meekly, and sat down with her father again. Dominoes and checkers with her papa, housework under the constant advice and reproof of her mama, never to be able to call even her hair her own, to be left on the shelf an old maid at last, yes, that would be her fate, she could feel it deep within her. Her heart began to knock against her sides in desperate fright, it seemed to have a voice of its own, crying "Let me out, let me out." Her father, seeing her forlorn face, pinched her cheek and said jovially, "Maybe our Elsa is in love with somebody—maybe that big solemn Swede Hansen. No, Elsa? Tell your papa and mama. We know best."

Elsa said even more meekly, placing a double-six after long hesitation, "No, no, Papa."

Frau Lutz, glancing up from her knitting, saw for a moment framed in the doorway against the bright horizon a sight which caused her to frown warningly at her husband, indiscreet, thoughtless as usual. Arne Hansen was dancing with Amparo. She seemed to be instructing him in the mysteries of her native dances. They passed and repassed the doorway, Hansen following as awkwardly as a dancing bear, with Amparo treating him as if indeed he were that animal and she the trainer. She seemed to be scolding him and laughing at him, they would pause swaying and she would take him by the elbows and shake him. In all seriousness he would begin again, his big hands and feet getting in the way, his wet shirt sticking to his pink skin. He seemed like a man bewitched, utterly indifferent to the scandalous figure he presented to the eyes of the world. Frau Lutz, amazed at this instance of failure in her judgment of men, a subject in which she considered herself an expert, was pleased to note that her daughter's back was turned towards this scene. She never ceased to worry, night and day, at the unbelievable difficulties a mother encountered in preserving the innocence of a daughter. Everywhere you turned, unsavory sights, immoral situations, disreputable characters, shameless behavior on the part even of those in whom you had placed some hope. Men! Her gaze rested upon her husband with baleful intensity. He was talking his usual foolishness to Elsa, playing his game without a care; what would have become of them if she had been unwise enough to depend upon his judgment in anything for an instant? Ah, she would find a very different kind of husband for Elsa, she had made up her mind to that.

Johann, pushing his uncle's wheel chair, heard the Spanish music, and went a little faster, then slowed down again as he came in sight of Lola, turning and clicking her heels. His sullen, fair-skinned face with its scanty blonde stubbles of beard shining, lighted up instinctively, he turned the chair towards the rail and almost stopped.

"Go on, Johann," said his uncle, for the slight joggling of the chair soothed him, and the movement against the wind helped his breathing. His shrivelled flesh and his very bones were old and tired and lonely; they cried day and night for a little ease and pity and comfort. In the hospital in Mexico the nurses had rubbed him with alcohol all over, their firm hands pressing lightly into the weariness of his muscles; they had fed him warm milk and cool fruit juices, he sucked them through a glass tube, half asleep as if he were a child again. In the night when he groaned and called out, a Mexican nun in her white linen face bands and black veil would come and softly swing the mattress on its light springs as if it were a cradle, and he would sleep again. Now in the miserable cabin, Johann touched him with loathing, he would hand him a dripping cold cloth and say rudely, "Wash your own face." He set down trays of coarse revolting food beside him and went away, without so much as giving him a spoon. In the long nights, when he would be in pain to ease nature, he might call and call until his throat closed and the pain in his chest shot through him like fire, before Johann would rouse to bring him the vessel. The humiliation of the helpless flesh was painful enough, without that hard unforgiving face above him, averted in loathing. "Johann," he wanted to cry, "child of my hopes, what has become of you? Pity, a little pity, in God's name." But there was no pity in that child. His soul was sicker than any flesh could be. Herr Graf trembled to think of its fate in God's judgment.

"Can't you see there is no room to pass them?" asked Johann, stubbornly lingering. "Let me be a moment, can't you?"

"Turn back, Johann," said Herr Graf, calmly, "turn back." The chair was whirled about so sharply he was thrown to one side. "Don't try to kill me, Johann," he said, in an ominous voice. "My God has promised me I shall see Germany again. Defy him if you dare."

"Keeping me penniless as a beggar," Johann burst out in a fury. "Where is the allowance you promised me? Why must I ask you for money even to go to the barber?"

"What would you do with money on this ship, Johann? It would be only another temptation set in your way. I will provide the necessaries, nephew, but I will not nourish your lusts and appetites. Your soul is too precious to risk in such a way, Johann. I know too well what use you would make of money here." He drew a long rattling sigh, the bloody phlegm came up in his throat, he choked and spat into his paper box.

"That's what you get for gabbing all the time," said Johann, "you miserly old Jew."

Herr Graf looked at his hands, emaciated, the knuckles like knobs, the fingers limp and so weak they lay flat or curved as they fell, and thought how

not so long ago they had the strength to punish this boy as he deserved. But God, who was taking away his life little by little, meant for him to suffer all pain, all possible abasement of mind and flesh to balance the great gift he had conferred upon his soul. From the very moment he had known his body was beginning to die, like a stream of pure light the divine knowledge had descended upon him that, as recompense for his death, God had given him the power of healing others. In this power his soul had been eased of its fears. To his shame he remembered now that he had once feared death, he had cringed abjectly as a condemned criminal at sight of the axe, he had prayed endlessly and incoherently, begging God to reverse His inalterable law in his, Johann Graf's, favor; to send a miracle; to punish him for his sins in any other way, no matter how cruel it might be, but only to let him live, even as he was, in pain, in decay, in despair, to let him live. He, a philosopher and teacher of philosophy, lecturer in universities, and before learned societies, had done this. When? In his other world, his other life. All his false wisdom had dropped away from him like soiled outworn rags, he had stood naked as the newly born in the steady stream of cleansing light, and the softest voice he had ever heard spoke within his ear. "Heal the sick," the voice had said, with the simplicity and directness which is the true language of revelation. And from that day he had gone about his work, knowing the truth; so long as he was able to keep upon his feet he was to go among the sick and touch them and heal them in God's name.

It had not been easy, for the perverse human wills of his family and friends had put every obstacle in his way. It seemed almost—and this was so dreadful a thought he hardly dared give it room in his mind—as if they bore some malice or evil intention toward the dying, as if they did not wish the sick to be healed and well again, like themselves. A friend of his sister's, a willful woman, would not allow him to touch her little grandson who was suffering from spinal meningitis, and the child had died. But he had saved his sister's servant, an Indian woman who had been in labor for three days and nights, until her eyes were sunken in her head and her lips were blackened and dry. The women around her had not wished him to enter the adobe hut against the wall in the back garden. He had gone in boldly, pushing them aside, and laid his hands upon the distorted suffering belly where the child kicked and heaved in his struggles to be born: and he was born safely an hour later. He had breathed into the mouth of an infant drowning with pneumonia, and from his own ruined lungs life had poured into the child's. Oh there were many: after they had sent him to the hospital, he had been forced to do good by stealth, for the doctors were bitterly jealous of his power, and hindered him by rules, forbidding him to visit the dying in order to touch them and give them life again. But God guided him. He knew in what place and at what hour he might find the one who needed him, and no one was frightened of him because he always said at once, "God bless you, and make you well," and then he touched them lightly, and was away before some prowling nurse or doctor should discover him and put an end to his work. Rarely in the hospital did he have the joy of

seeing his resurrected ones in health and strength, he was watched too closely, he could not risk a second visit. But there was one: the girl with the red hair in two braids lying behind the death-screen with eyes fixed upward, her face livid and mouth half open, burning to his touch like living fire. "God will make you well, do you believe?" he had asked her, and from the parched mouth scarcely moving he heard the words, "I believe." Oh blessed child of faith. He had seen that girl, recognizable by her red hair, leaving the hospital with her happy family not a week later. "The doctors will think they did it, but we know the truth, my child," he had said to her.

These were his memories, and this his recompense, and what were his own sufferings but a divine grace since they had been made so useful to humanity? What was death? Why had he been afraid? And there remained the greatest reward of all: immortality for the suffering bewildered soul. Immortality. It is not a matter of belief, what is there to believe? How can one form a wish around anything so infinitely formless? It is a matter of faith—no, a *hope,* a fixed, changeless longing for a continued existence in another place, under another appearance, in a different element: continued existence at least until all questions are answered, and all unfinished things are done. But this longing may prove to be merely a motive power of the present existence, an intellectual concept related to the animal instinct of self-preservation; man loves himself so dearly he cannot relinquish willingly one atom of himself to oblivion. Perhaps the idea originates therefore in the ego, and is simply one of the varied and deluded activities of the will. And what about four-footed beasts? Perhaps they have a corresponding source of vital energy in them; or better, they do not even suspect they shall not live forever. Ah, there's happiness for you—there is the lucky state of being. . . .

Herr Graf opened his eyes with a leap of nerves thrilling with pain all through him: he must have dozed and dreamed, what had he been thinking? Weakness and despair almost overwhelmed him. "Johann," he muttered, his tongue thick, "water, water," and then, "My God, My God," but the prayer, whatever it was, stopped on his lips. He did not dare to pray, he did not know what to pray for. The soul after death may discover a bliss it is now unable to imagine, and no matter how mysterious its longings now, it will understand then. Ah, maybe heaven is merely this: that Johann Graf may never once remember he was Johann Graf. Is that what is meant, perhaps, by the words "forgiveness of sins"?

"Water, water, Johann," he said again, but there was no answer. He felt the slight swaying motion of the chair being wheeled again smoothly after a long pause. As they turned the corner the dark shadow of his nephew's head and shoulders fell across his own, lay upon his knees and stretched before them upon the deck. The silence stretched too until it broke with the strain of its own hatred. "You want water?" asked Johann at last, with false solicitude, mimicking the tone of kindness with elaborate cruelty. Gathering himself, he spat out his poison. "Well, wait until you get it, you old corpse."

AUSTIN WARREN:

The Case of Vachel Lindsay

Nothing that Lindsay did came off triumphantly. He couldn't be treated like Emerson in Arnold's famous essay: not this, not this, not this, but that. Lindsay's story, narrated by Edgar Lee Masters, is sad, grotesque, instructive. The book belongs with Horton's *Hart Crane,* Foster Damon's *Amy Lowell,* and Hagedorn's *Robinson*—all honest, painful chronicles of "what it means to be a poet in the U. S."

Vachel Lindsay was not only an American, but a Middle Westerner, and very conscious of it—or, conscious, at least, of not being an Easterner. For him, America divided into the wealthy, genteel, intellectual Eastern seaboard (the hated, supercilious New England) and the rest of the country.

A proud citizen of Springfield, Illinois, he felt early hostility to the bearded Massachusetts poets whose pictures appeared in the literature textbooks and whose claims to represent "culture" were asserted by the schoolmarm. His heroes were the extra-canonical Poe and Whitman, and later Mark Twain (whose *Huck Finn* he quite modernly saw.)

Lindsay's stock on both sides were solid, middle-class Protestants. Grandpa Lindsay, of Gallatin County, Kentucky, died "unreconstructed." Grandpa Frazee, of Indiana, was a farmer, a breeder of cattle and horses, a lay preacher. Vachel's father, "Dr. Mohawk," was a country doctor who travelled around in an old buggy stuffed with bottles and surgical instruments. Otherwise to name him, he was a fanatical prohibitionist and anti-nicotinist, vigorously masculine and black-bearded, proud of having worked his way to independence and respected position.

Vachel was a golden-curled "mother's boy": he loved and hated his mother, found her absurd and domineering, pathetic, massive, and necessary. In Mary Baker Eddy (as portrayed by Ida Tarbell) Lindsay found "the same kind of person, who requires enormous long-range activities to keep from over-managing all those nearby." Lindsay was over forty when she died; the year following, he suffered a nervous breakdown from which he never completely recovered:—

Lindsay's "case" is his great interest. Why didn't he come off as a poet? Probably the best answer is: he was "torn between" too many opposing forces, forces which he couldn't really comprehend, couldn't properly name, let alone resolve.

He was neither a completely "uneducated poet," or autodidact, nor yet a "civilized" poet: he venerated museums of historic art, while, on the other hand, sponsoring the idea of a "popular" and *lively* art . . . His best bet certainly lay in the latter. The "cultivated" side of Lindsay is largely "sissy" and vapid. He hadn't mind enough or taste enough to take the line of Stevens or Eliot. Mean-

while, though he kept protesting that he was not a "jazz" poet—that he hated jazz, he certainly liked its religious equivalent in the gospel hymns, and as certainly wanted to create a lowbrow art. Certainly he envied the vitality of the lowbrows, the vitality of "Dionysiac" religion.

There is another confusion in Lindsay,—of regionalism and internationalism. Each nation has its own culture: quite rightly he hated the condescension with which 100% Americans treated "newcomers"—"new Americans" (dagoes, sheenies, etc.); remembered that Italy had produced Dante and da Vinci as well as the banana vendor. So Lindsay hated New England condescension to South and Middle West, and American condescension to foreigners—wanted a regional culture.

This strain in Lindsay might have led him to a kind of Middle Western Fascism. It prompted him to attack the East coast and Europe as effete, and to prefer Evangelical, Fundamentalist, revivalist Protestantism, which would be, of course, an agrarian and Jeffersonian Protestantism—like that of Grandpa Frazee. Out of this self Lindsay can write (to Professor Armstrong, of Baylor Baptist University, Texas):

> The coeducational, Middle West denominational college is to me the highest point in American civilization . . . I believe profoundly in our agricultural and Middle West civilization and think it the natural America . . . . I greatly mistrust industrial America, radical or conservative . . . I want in some sense to represent the honest, clean, devout young Americans who are courting and studying Browning and saying their prayers on campuses like yours. I disagree with them a great deal, but . . . I am more keenly aware of how I differ from everything east of the Mississippi River or Springfield, in Europe or America.

But this strain is countered by another,—an eclectic and liberal religiosity. Just as his mother's "great achievement" was uniting all the women's missionary societies of Springfield, Illinois, so in Vachel there was a good deal of the "reunionizer" of "the churches"—"There's good in *all* the churches." Lindsay didn't permanently remain a Fundamentalist Evangelical, however much he liked that mask; after his teens he is best, if untechnically, described as a "theosophist" or "esoteric Christian." Like Yeats, Babbitt, and Huxley, he believed that we could learn from the Wisdom of the East as well as from Occidental Christianity. As for Christianity, he was Catholic as well as Campbellite, and Swedenborgian into the bargain. There is a kind of common denominator in Lindsay's religiosity: it is never theological, but unites the Dionysiac ("mystical" he would have called it) with the humanitarian (thought of generally in an Apocalyptic light.) Such eclecticism prompted Lindsay's dream of a cathedral for his home town, one which should have altars to all reputable gods and heroes. He hoped for a creedless religion, shared by all kind and art-loving people.

Analogous was his dream of a synoptic American culture to which the Irish, the Jew, the Pole, and the Negro should each make his own distinctive contribution. Lindsay's Y. M. C. A. art class in New York was composed of policemen,

street-car conductors—Italians, Greeks, Jews. He printed off some of his poems and at nights went in shops along Tenth Avenue selling them—visited Chinese laundries; listened to the street services of the Salvation Army. These were not Lindsay's stock: he was partly a Quixote, partly a cultural missionary. But he also had his silent, unnamed community with the despised and the rejected—the wop and the sheeny and the chink, for Lindsay himself was an involuntary "outsider." Like E. A. Robinson, he longed for the admiration of the solid, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant citizens of his home town. Both would have coveted Emerson's happy fortune of being respected by Concord as well as celebrated by the intelligentsia; but at that ambition neither succeeded. Lindsay was the Bronson Alcott of Springfield. He had the backing of the local "liberals," had his own little circle, composed of Single Taxers, Swedenborgians, and high school teachers. But that didn't really satisfy him, for he didn't command the world of his mother and father: they and their kind didn't take him seriously.

In 1926 Lindsay entrusted to the *Saturday Evening Post* a painful, eloquent confession of "What It Means to be a Poet in America." Reared on the Romantic poets and the Romantic conception of Milton, Lindsay thought of the poet as *vates*. "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the nations." His view of the poet as myth-maker instead of verse-writer led him to the thesis that before the Civil War our real poets were our statesmen—Jefferson, Hamilton, Lincoln.

The poet as imaginative statesman passes into the poet as saint and martyr. Lindsay early identified himself with the Messiah: thought of himself as, till thirty, preparing for his ministry, spoke of the crucifixion of the Middle West artist, dreamed of crucified angels and thorny crowns. About the later Lindsay there was, according to Masters, much of the bishop—something sacerdotal and pontifical. On his walking trips of 1908 and 1912, he was also, of course, a friar, a mendicant, clad in the garb of poverty and chastity, going forth to preach the Gospel of Beauty. A Franciscan, he was also an itinerant Protestant, like Johnny Appleseed: he scattered his poems as Johnny scattered his leaves from Swedenborg.

Lindsay never subscribed to the "didactic heresy" nor to the Orphic. He is a propagandist, but not in verse; and he is never an intellectual poet. The chief Lindsay poems—public pieces for oral performance—might be genealogically understood in terms of "The Bells" and "The Raven," "When Lilacs Last," and "O, Pioneers." Poe is suggested by Lindsay's fondness for onomatopoeic effects and the more obvious phonetic devices (strongly marked rhythms, plentiful rhyme, alliteration); Whitman, by the search for an American myth, a democratic tradition made imaginative.

"The priest departs; the divine literatus comes." *Democratic Vistas* bespeaks the need of a new democratic poetry, to succeed that of feudalism. Lindsay's chief response is by creating an American mythology—this is partly a series of folk-heroes (folk-versions of folk-heroes)—Andrew Jackson, William Jennings Bryan, Johnny Appleseed, Alexander Campbell, and General William Booth, partly through mythic poems. These hero-pieces attempt to make a popular

regional poetry—legends, so to speak. Two other chief Lindsay poems—"The Chinese Nightingale" and "The Congo"—grow out of Lindsay's "home missionary" spirit.

2

Lindsay was slow in finding focus. He had passed thirty when his "General Booth" was published, when his first book (of which that is the titular poem) was lauded by Howells, Masefield, Chesterton, and then the generality. From 1913 until his suicide in 1931, he was a public figure, making tours of the states as a "reader"—a chanter or rhapsode of his own works.

He developed considerable shrewdness in the course of these tours. The letters to one of his managers, Professor Armstrong, might be those of a Protestant revivalist or of a political candidate like his admired Bryan. He is selling poetry to the nation. He goes to work organizing the campaign—passing good-humored judgment on rival organizers and promoters like Amy Lowell, Harriet Monroe, and the *London Mercury's* J. C. Squire. He thinks of himself as a pioneer and road-breaker; recommends Robinson, Frost, and Percy Mackaye to "follow up" with more considered and intensive work. A proper son of his mother, he thinks of such a nation-wide campaign as carried on through existing organizations. He does not, however, use the Chautauqua circuits; nor will he use the women's clubs, which, he writes Professor Armstrong, "are for the most part made up of rich, middle-aged women that their husbands put on a salary to let them alone." His chosen instrumentality is to be another peculiarly American institution—the "English department," in both high schools and colleges the purveyor of general culture, from radical ideology to theatre and music; and his local agent, everywhere, is to be that "local versifier and troubadour who is disguised as an English instructor."

"English departments," in contrast to the women's clubs, were moulders of young, still educable Americans. But Lindsay's evangelical ambition was not satiate when he had taught the teachers. He thirsted to reach and "influence" the American males who guided the opinions of other adult males. In his successful days, he noted bitterly that the local newspaper editor, the "owner of the mind of the town," never attended the dinners given in his honor. If he was constantly, in those same years, invited to appear before the Rotary, the Kiwanis, the Lions, and the Optimists, composed of the leading business and professional men of Middletown, he was not fooled: they expected him to *amuse* them, to "do his stuff" as a queer new kind of vaudevillian—he who had, he believed, as much to say to the American people as Hoover, Hughes, or Bryan.

What Lindsay offered his evening audiences happily remains to be heard on a series of recordings which includes three of the best poems (as well as the chief show-pieces of his tours,—pieces which, in consequence, he came to detest performing)—"General Booth," "The Congo," "The Chinese Nightingale."*

*The Lindsay disks, originally recorded for William Cabell Greet, are now in the excellent Contemporary Poets' Series of the National Council of Teachers of English.

Lindsay was generally advertised as a "jazz poet," a label he hated. What he patently had in mind to do was, on the one hand, to revive the tradition of oral poetry and the craft of that professional performer called the rhapsode; and, on the other, to ally poetry with the 'lively arts,' to show the American male that poetry needn't be hortatory, hermetic, or otherwise pretentious and boring. Lindsay wanted to unite folk-art with high-brow art. In 1912 he diarized: "Write poems to conform to popular tunes in the outline of their melody, like 'A hot time,' 'After the ball' . . . There ought to be poems on astrology, palmistry . . . " He doesn't mention the Gospel hymns, so-called (by whom first I don't know); but they deserve prominent position in any repertory of American folk-music—these Protestant songs, usually originating in large-scale revivals like those of Moody and Sankey or Billy Sunday and Homer Rodeheaver, which, collected into the "red book" or the "green book," furnish the Dionysiac quality to the "evening preaching service," the "prayer meeting," and the "young people's society." They fall into pretty straightforward categories: primarily the sentimental ("Almost Persuaded,") and the hearty ("Bringing in the Sheaves"). Despite the aversion of older Evangelicals to dancing, the Gospel tunes are heartily rhythmic, in the pattern of the march, the two-step, the polka, the waltz. Lindsay's "Booth" offers as its musical signature one of these rousing hymns particularly suited to performance by Salvation Army bands as well as by pastors, white and black, beating out the accents on the pulpit Bible: "Power, Power, Wonder-working Power in the Precious Blood of the Lamb."

Of course the ancestry of "Booth" and the "Congo" is not so simple as this. It is, clearly, chant-poetry (in contrast to speech-poetry) at which Lindsay aimed. While writing to a musical tune, as Burns and Moore did, gives one song-poetry, chant-poetry is written to a primitive rhythmical pattern such as can be sung-and-danced, or clapped out (as children do their sidewalk games.) The prosodic lineage of the Lindsay poems goes back to the nursery rhymes and specifically to the "dipodic movement" which begins with Kipling's *Barrack-Room Ballads* and is represented in English poetry before 1920 by Noyes, Masefield, and Chesterton. The story of this movement remains to be told, and not all the sequences are yet clear; but there are marked generic denominators: all these poets, from Kipling to Lindsay, are, in reaction against esoteric and subjective poetry, writing popular, balladic oral pieces, generally narrative, rhythmic, aimed at oral performance. This crudely popular poetry is accentual, not syllabic, in its base; and, wherever prose accent and verse accent conflict, it is the tune-pattern which imposes itself, a pattern easily to be got from the lines in which the accents coincide. The basic dipodic rhythm (/ ∪ // ∪) is often a continuum upon which is imposed a more obvious pattern of clustered stresses regularly recurring.

In Masefield, there are the recurrent two-stress clusters ("it's a warm wind, the west wind" or "And the wheel's kick and the wind's song") but there are,

though less characteristic, the three-stress clusters, used as cadence (the verse I just cited ends "and the white sail's shaking"; in "Cargoes" the pattern is obvious in the monosyllabic cadences of "sweet white wine" and "cheap tin trays.") Chesterton's "Lepanto" offers, however, the closest parallel to Lindsay's rhythmic "signature," the / / / ∪ ∪ ∪ / / / ("Booth led boldly with his big bass drum'):

Chesterton writes

> "Strong gongs groaning as the guns boom far,"
>
> and
>
> "Stiff flags straining in the night-blasts cold."*

Priority is not easy to assign. Untermeyer (*Modern British Poetry,* 233) speaks of "Lepanto" as "anticipating the clanging verses of 'The Congo' "; but "Lepanto" (1915) is antedated by Lindsay's "Booth" (1913) and "Congo" (1914). Masefield and Chesterton gave to Lindsay's *Booth and Other Poems* praise which was recognition of a shared cause.

It is not clear just when Lindsay evolved his special mode of oral performance. His poems require such performance, are not to be judged from an eye-reading of the scores, though one should have the text by him while he listens to Lindsay, who indeed expected his audiences to look and listen at the same time. All poets, even those whose self-consciousness renders them incompetent, are upon occasion invited to give public readings from their work. Lindsay, who, like Cummings, Joyce, and MacLeish, was a brilliant *diseur* as well as poet, must gradually have learned how to implement vocally the phonetic qualities (of rhythm, pitch, timbre, volume) which presumably were in part present to his mind as he originally composed the texts.

Lindsay invoked, as honorific precedent, the union, in the ancient Greek theatre, of dance, song, and literature; but the ingredients of his own technic can be actually assembled out of more or less traditional forms with which he was familiar: oratory, political and ecclesiastical: the "silver-tongued" eloquence of Bryan's "Cross of Gold" and the pulpit eloquence of the Evangelical clergyman—perhaps Dr. Russell H. Conwell, in his celebrated Chautauqua lecture,

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*How to bar off Lindsay's rhythmic signature seems relatively unimportant, though it seems irrelevantly "classical" to speak, as Masters does, of the first foot as a *molossus* (the Greek term for a foot of three long syllables) . . . in which case we must scan the rest of the line as composed of a pyrrhic foot and another molossus. Using the conception of the monosyllabic foot, we can scan: / / / / / ∪ ∪ ∪ / / / / / / ;
or, carrying out the dipodic pattern more literally, we can read:

/ Booth led / boldly with his / big bass / drum /

The best historical treatment of dipodic and allied meters is in George R. Stewart's *Modern Metrical Technique, as Illustrated by Ballad Meters, 1700-1920* (N. Y., 1922.) On the modern "dipodists" there are excellent remarks in H. W. Wells' *New Poets from Old.* And for a convincing argument that Hopkins' "Sprung rhythm" aimed at another kind of dipody, there is Harold Whitehall's essay in the New Directions *G. M. Hopkins.*

"Acres of Diamonds"; then the traditional "elocution" and "declamation"—for which Lindsay's college, Hiram, was famed: the taste and skill, now probably extinct, for exhibitionistic virtuosity like that required, variously, for Byron's "Roll on, thou dark and deep" and Poe's "The Bells"; then simple forms of song, chant, and intonation such as are represented by the priest's plainsong responses in a *missa cantata* and by the traditional "cries" of street-vendors in London and New York. But Lindsay mixes, in his performance, oratorical effects with song and chant effects. This is the chief vice of his reading. His best poems start from strong rhythms, the dipodic rhythm of nursery rhymes, only with characteristic clusters of stresses

("Booth led boldly with his big bass drum");

and the oral "realization" ought, I think, to keep close to the tune: song-verse, not speech-verse, the semantic and expressive elements should adjust themselves to the drum-beat: the drums should dominate. But in "General Booth," Lindsay is beguiled by Protestant pulpit bathos into breaking up the rhythms in order to introduce sentimental pauses, accompanied by would-be touching, "melting" timbre, some kind of vibrato: "He saw . . . his *master*" (high quivering pitch on first syllable; then glide to low on second); "He saw—King Jesus." The rhythm ought to go banging, rattling, and jing-jing-jingling away without regard to these swell-pedal, vox humana luxuries.

Generally, I think, the speech parts of Lindsay's recordings are inferior to the song and chant parts; the reason is, probably, that, having once got past the barrier of chanting and singing (which he can do, with accurate pitch intervals), he is no longer self-conscious but, instead, anonymous—whereas when he undertakes to start the Chinese lady off on her last speech he gives her the potty, pseudo-cultivated tones of some Hokinson clubwoman asking to have read the minutes of the last meeting. Sheerly onomatopoeic effects and imitations, like the accelerating sequence of "boom-lay" in "The Congo,"—effects much used in the Sitwell and Walton *Facade,* a brilliant divertissement which must owe something to Lindsay,*—are not common: more characteristic are bold shifts of *pitch* from section to section: after the "shrill and high" tone of "Wild crapshooters, with a whoop and a call," the burden, the underlying *motif* of "Then I Saw the Congo," is chanted in a "deep rolling bass," that of some Russian or Negro *profondo;* then the voice goes into a lyric tenor. Lindsay uses something like two octaves in the range of his performances—though the intervals within the melodic sequences (*e.g.,* "Have you forgotten, deep in the ages,"—in "The Nightingale") are small,—a third, ordinarily, and the whole sequence confined to the pentatone. Of his three chief pieces, "The Nightingale" is the most elaborate in its oral devices,—the most calculatedly worked out—presumably because it far less obviously invites chanting than the others.

*_Facade_ was first produced publicly at London, in 1923. Lindsay visited England in 1920; was hospitably received, and recited his poems, at London, Oxford, and Cambridge.

3

When one studies the text of Lindsay's poems, takes them seriously at their mythic level, one encounters the unresolved in Lindsay's imagination—the gap between his taste for drawing butterflies, ferns, and vines, and for "culture and refinement," and his genuine and creative taste for the vivid, the characteristic, the grotesque, the crudely vital.

The initial perception of "Booth Enters into Heaven" is admirable: Heaven centers, like any Mid-Western county seat, in "The mighty court-house square"; and the Judgment Day is imaged as it might well be in the mind of an American child, with Judge Jesus impressively coming to the Court-house to "review" the parade of the Salvation Army converts, all of whom, in a body, have accompanied the General as he marches into Heaven to be decorated—to receive his traditional "robe and crown." They march into Heaven just as they are—"saved," but characteristic: "vermin-eaten saints with mouldy breath," "bull-necked convicts," "loons with bazoos," banjo-banging lassies,—"the weasel-head, the snout, the jowl." Shall they remain so to all eternity? A difficult question to the religious imagination—that of personal identity and continuity in the after-life. Lindsay gets mixed up and off his intuitive balance. Compelled to think of Jesus as metamorphosing these Bowery characters, he indulges the strange fantasy (possibly his own in untypical boyhood) of turning them into "classical" figures—"sages and sibyls now, and athletes clean" (doubtless some recall of Athenian youth discoursing with Socrates as well as of the Y. M. C. A. locker room.) However, then they should all be playing on (heavenly and classical) harps and lyres. But not so: now Lindsay swings back to his other, and happier, perception,—that the Salvationists should themselves stay fundamentally the same and so bring some much-needed warmth, color, and variety into Heaven.

> But their noise played havoc with the angel-choir . . .
> The banjos rattled, and the tambourines
> Jing-jing-jingled in the hands of queens!

The mythic structure of the more elaborate "Congo" is correspondingly more confused. The Negroes are said to have resented the piece as offering a genetic reduction, hauling them back to their origins. But, though Lindsay was not clear about what he was doing, he certainly did not mean to ridicule the Negro—even in the cakewalk of "Their Irrepressible High Spirits." And so far as he saw the ancestral African within (or behind) the American Negro, it was with considerable admiration and sympathy. His feelings, however, were very mixed—without his knowing it; hence the unintentional, the inartistic, ambivalence on which the poem founders. The confusion emerges most palpably in Section III, which corresponds to "Booth Enters Heaven." Is the "Hope" of the Negroes' "Religion" to be found in the Bible-banging, jubilee-revival religion of the opening episode, or is that Fundamentalist religion the Negroes' evil,—the survival of the witch-doctors and their menacing Mumbo-Jumbo? The Revivalist congregation shake the room with "Glory, glory, glory"

and "Boom, boom, boom": doesn't this parallelism equate the two? Yet in quite another tone is the fanciful picture of a renovated Africa with the Twelve Apostles in coats of bright white steel mail sitting on their thrones (a translation of the Apostles into crusading Arthurian knights—certainly no archetypal image in the collective unconscious of the Negro, though it may have been a favorite fantasy of the boy Lindsay,) and the annexed fancy-picture of the cleaned-up Congo "slums,"—the tidied-up jungle—the work of "pioneer angels" interested in establishing a playground for "babes," while angels row up and down the Congo in blue boats. Is this progressive picnic, this Boy Scout campaign, a "revised version" of the revival religion, and that in turn of the worship of Mumbo-Jumbo; or does the fancy picture represent "true" (*i.e.,* liberal) religion, in which lies the Negroes' "Hope"?

The poem ends overtly or doctrinally, with the exorcism from Congoland of Mumbo-Jumbo; but only doctrinally—for the refrain recurs at the very end and would be felt by most audiences—and rightly, I think—to have a positive force.

Let us turn back to the first section, "Their Basic Savagery": Seeing the American Negroes, drunk, pounding on the tables and barrels, leads Lindsay into interpretation and evaluation.

> Then I had religion,
> Then I had a vision.
> I could not turn from their revel in derision.

"Had religion" must equal "got religion," *i.e.,* had a religious experience, was converted: viewing the meaning of the wine-barrel scene in terms of the African past, "I could not turn from their revel in derision." And Lindsay does not: even the cannibals' thirst for blood is sympathetically played down by the reminder of King Leopold of the Belgians and his cruel traffic in slaves. Or again: can there be anything very wicked about a battle-cry characterized as a "roaring, epic, ragtime tune,"—*i.e.,* the African archetype of "There'll be a hot time in the old town to-night"?

In the second section, the clusterings and oppositions are again impossible to make out with any assurance. What is the relation of the "wild crap shooters" and the juba dancers to the cakewalk of the rest of the section? The parallelism of structure between sections seems to require that after the return of the solemn refrain, "Then I saw the Congo," we have another glimpse back into archetypal Africa. But what follows the refrain, in section two, doesn't offer African fact but somebody's fancy—probably Lindsay's—of a future "Negro fairyland" along the "minstrel river" Congo—yet, strangely enough, a fairyland where menacing witch-men attempt to crush Negro gaiety by their "stern cold glare" and their warning of Mumbo-Jumbo's wrath against those who don't "walk with care." Where are our "values" here? The ascetic witch-men seem to have some alliance with prohibitions and commandments, prophets and clergy, morality and religion; yet it seems that we are to take the side of the "irrepressible high spirits" shown by the dancers. The section ends with as trick and

evasive a solution as the third: the cakewalk dancers swing to the savage voodoo tune of "Boomlay," and the witch-men, apparently—having been unsuccessful in frightening the gay out of their gaiety—join in—sing along with, "the scalawags prancing there."

4

I am not here attempting any complete discussion of Lindsay's poems. There are interesting pieces in other modes than the "Booth": the two surprisingly good epigraphic pieces, "Lincoln Walks at Midnight," and "The Leaden-Eyed"; the gay period *divertimento* of "Bryan"; the curious romantic lyrics called "I Walked Alone in the Jungles of Heaven" (originally "How Johnny Appleseed Walked Alone") and "I Heard Immanuel Singing." But they give one no perfection. The movement of American culture passes through Lindsay: his is a historic moment of participation; many lines pass through him and go on. He recognized the talent of his young fellow-townsman Robert Fitzgerald; he discovered the talent of Langston Hughes; he was a generous promoter of such contemporaries as Frost. He welcomed and encouraged Percy Grainger and Thomas Benton, "regionalists" and "folk-artists" in music and painting. But these are instances of his practical judgment as an "organizer": If one wants to feel what kind of poetic life flows through Lindsay, he can have the perception most efficiently through reading Lindsay's "Bryan" at its chronological position in Auden's *Oxford Book of Lighter Verse,*—a volume of poems largely anonymous, including

> Gay go up and gay go down
> To ring the bells of London town

and R. A. Millikan's witty version of eighteenth-century Dublin street-minstrelsy, "The Groves of Blarney."

The Idea of Great Poetry which hovers over us today is that of a mythic poetry which shall unite workmen and intellectuals by discovering in the shared, traditional tale its hidden, but not planted, import. Lindsay glimpsed the Idea. He had not, however, the intellectual vigor or subtlety requisite. What he can perform is unsteadily oscillatory between the romantic lyric (Poe, Swinburne) and anonymous folk-poetry. When he escapes from "bourgeois culture and refinement," it is by identification with the people and folk-art; but the escape is demanding, and he cannot then use folk-art as thematics for a mythic poetry. He expurgated some false refinements; he achieved a degree of poetic anonymity. He had faith in a unity of culture ahead of us.

MINA LOY:

Ephemerid

The Eternal is sustained by serial metamorphosis,
even so Beauty is

metamorphosis surprises!

Low in shadow
of the El's
arboreal iron

some aerial, unbeknown
eerie-form
of dual mobility,

having long wing, an unbelievable
imp-fly

soars

trailing
a horizontal gauze;

trudges, urges,
crouches;

its knees' apexes, a roach's.

Humanly sized
a magnified imago

towing in twofold progress
nameless nostalgia through slush,
enigma along gloom.

As always, has a wisp of whiteness loveliness
to lift the eyelids;
to whisper of subvisual resources
in the uncolor of the unknown.

Across indefinite curbstones
focus

this creature of fictitious
faery,
this eccentric of traffic:

after all
the illicit insect
is only
a little girl—

—a long white muslin curtain,
tied to her pull-over,
afloat from her,
she pilots an ideal load

taking a heavy child
for a ride

in a fragile,
stalling
doll's perambulator.

The dilating wing
billows from her shoulders
the wondering of windows,

mildews, as the soul does,
penury
with dream.

Ponder this
metamorphosis:

Infancy's
kidnap into Fantasia.

RICHARD WILBUR:

Cigales

You know those windless summer evenings, swollen to stasis
by too-substantial melodies, rich as a
running-down record, ground round
to full quiet. Even the leaves
have thick tongues.

And if the first crickets quicken then,
other inhabitants, at window or door
or rising from table, feel in the lungs
a slim-false-freshness, by this
trick of the ear.

Chanters of miracles took for a simple sign
the Latin cigale, because of his long waiting
and sweet change in daylight, and his singing
all his life, pinched on the ash-leaf,
heedless of ants.

Others made morals; all were puzzled and joyed
by his gratuitous song. Such a plain thing
morals could not surround, nor listening:
not "chirr" nor "cri-cri." There is no straight
way of approaching it.

This thin uncomprehended song it is
springs healing questions into binding air.
Fabre, by firing all the municipal cannon
under a piping tree, found out
cigales cannot hear.

Grace

"The young lambs bound As to the tabor's sound.
They toss and toss: it is as if it were the
earth that flung them, not themselves. It is
the pitch of graceful agility when we think that."
G. M. Hopkins: Notebooks

So active they seem passive, little sheep
Please, and Nijinsky's out-the-window-leap
And marvellous midair pause please too
A taste for blithe brute reflex; flesh made word
Is grace's revenue.

One is tickled, again, by the dining-car waiter's absurd
Acrobacy—tip-fingered tray like a wind-besting bird
Plumblines his swinging shoes, the sole things sure
In the shaken train; but this is all done for food,
Is habitude, if not pure

Hebetude. It is a graph of a theme that flings
The dancer kneeling on nothing into the wings,
And Nijinsky hadn't the words to make the laws

For learning to loiter in air; he "merely" said,
"I merely leap and pause."

Lambs are constrained to bound. Consider instead
The intricate neural grace in Hamlet's head;
A grace not barbarous implies a choice
Of courses, not in a lingo of leaps-in-air,
But in such a waiting voice

As one would expect to hear in the talk of Flaubert.
Piety makes for awkwardness, and where
Balance is not urgent, what one utters
May be puzzled and perfect, and we respect
Some scholars' stutters.

Even fraction-of-a-second action is not wrecked
By a graceful still reserve. To be unchecked
Is needful then: choose, challenge, jump, poise, run . . .
Nevertheless, the praiseful, graceful soldier
Shouldn't be fired by his gun.

A Song

As at the bottom of a seething well
A phosphorus girl is singing,
Up whispering galleries trellised notes
Climb and cling.

It is a summer-song an old man wrote
Out of the winter's wringing,
He hunched in a cold room, back to frost's
Sledge and sting.

Desperate, gentle, every phrase declines
As fruit to groundward weighs,
As all things seek their shadows, yearn,
Yearn and fall.

She may be singing Iowa afternoons,
Lightshifting corn ballets,
Scattering stutter of windmills, each throat's
Very clear call;

Nevertheless, the balconies are in tune
And all but a single child

Are hushed in sweet relinquishing, in
Praise of time.

But the white child is puzzled, cannot hear,
To loss not reconciled
Has heartroom still for sorrows, needs no
Song or rhyme.

RUTH LECHLITNER:

Hymenal

The brisk young green of salad rows
Are cool to my hand, and the spring sun
Drawing the dew from garden mould,
Warm over my shoulder. Slowly I turn,
Then listen. There is a sound
Like wind over dry grass, but no wind.
Close by the stone wall edging the old wood road
I hear it once again:
The long and pebbly rustle through dead leaves—
A not-to-be-forgotten sound that chills
The flesh of the serpent-wary. The brown
Leaves lift and turn; a rustle, harsh and strong,
Shakes the alder bush. Then suddenly there
Not one, but two, I see them: their long
Forms weave and twist: slow, undulant,
Oblivious and dark and violent.

Two mating serpents, weightless, wound
Each upon each, locked spiral-vined,
Rise perpendicular, rub their sleek heads, caressing—
Only their delicate tail-tips touch the ground.
The axis of all Spring, and all beginning,
All tensile life, spins hard and bright
There in the lemon gold of April light.
Danger! The entwined
Heads stiffen, motionless.
The quick thin tongues, antennae listeners,
Tasting the changed air, blaze
One instant: liquid then
The dark rods melt, become
Two waves parting the whistling grass,
Two narrow streams with the noise of running waters
Flowing their separate ways.

FLANNERY O'CONNOR:

The Geranium

Old Dudley folded into the chair he was gradually molding to his own shape and looked out the window fifteen feet away into another window framed by blackened red brick. He was waiting for the geranium. They put it out every morning about ten and they took it in at five-thirty. Mrs. Carson back home had a geranium in her window. There were plenty of geraniums at home, better looking geraniums. Ours are sho nuff geraniums, Old Dudley thought, not any er this pale pink business with green, paper bows. The geranium they would put in the window reminded him of the Grisby boy at home who had polio and had to be wheeled out every morning and left in the sun to blink. Lutisha could have taken that geranium and stuck it in the ground and had something worth looking at in a few weeks. Those people across the alley had no business with one. They set it out and let the hot sun bake it all day and they put it so near the ledge the wind could almost knock it over. They had no business with it, no business with it. It shouldn't have been there. Old Dudley felt his throat knotting up. Lutish could root anything. Rabie too. His throat was drawn taut. He laid his head back and tried to clear his mind. There wasn't much he could think of to think about that didn't do his throat that way.

His daughter came in. "Don't you want to go out for a walk?" she asked. She looked provoked.

He didn't answer her.

"Well?"

"No." He wondered how long she was going to stand there. She made his eyes feel like his throat. They'd get watery and she'd see. She had seen before and had looked sorry for him. She'd looked sorry for herself too; but she could er saved herself, Old Dudley thought, if she'd just have let him alone—let him stay where he was back home and not be so taken up with her damn duty. She moved out of the room leaving an audible sigh to crawl over him and remind him again of that one minute—that wasn't her fault at all—when suddenly he had wanted to go to New York to live with her.

He could have got out of going. He could have been stubborn and told her he'd spend his life where he'd always spent it, send him or not send him the money every month, he'd get along with his pension and odd jobs. Keep her damn money—she needed it worse than he did. She would have been glad to have had her duty disposed of like that. Then she could have said if he died without his children near him, it was his own fault; if he got sick and there wasn't anybody to take care of him, well, he'd asked for it, she could have said. But there was that thing inside him that had wanted to see New York. He had been to Atlanta once when he was a boy and he had seen New York in a picture show. "Big Town Rhythm" it was. Big towns were important places. The

thing inside him had sneaked up on him for just one instant. The place like he'd seen in the picture show had room for him! It was an important place and it had room for him! He'd said, yes, he'd go.

He must have been sick when he said it. He couldn't have been well and said it. He had been sick and she had been so taken up with her damn duty, she had wangled it out of him. Why did she have to come down there in the first place to pester him? He had been doing all right. There was his pension that could feed him and odd jobs that kept him his room in the boarding house.

The window in that room showed him the river—thick and red as it struggled over rocks and around curves. He tried to think how it was besides red and slow. He added green blotches for trees on either side of it and a brown spot for trash somewhere upstream. He and Rabie had fished it in a flat-bottom boat every Wednesday. Rabie knew the river up and down for twenty miles. There wasn't another nigger in Coa County that knew it like he did. He loved the river, but it hadn't meant anything to Old Dudley. The fish were what he was after. He liked to come in at night with a long string of them and slap them down in the sink. "Few fish I got," he'd say. It took a man to get those fish, the old girls at the boarding house always said. He and Rabie would start out early Wednesday morning and fish all day. Rabie would find the spots and row; Old Dudley always caught them. Rabie didn't care much about catching them—he just loved the river. "Ain't no use settin' yo' line down dere, boss," he'd say, "ain't no fish dere. Dis ol' riber ain't hidin' none nowhere 'round hyar, nawsuh," and he would giggle and shift the boat downstream. That was Rabie. He could steal cleaner than a weasel but he knew where the fish were. Old Dudley always gave him the little ones.

Old Dudley had lived upstairs in the corner room of the boarding house ever since his wife died in '22. He protected the old ladies. He was the man in the house and he did the things a man in the house was supposed to do. It was a dull occupation at night when the old girls crabbed and crocheted in the parlor and the man in the house had to listen and judge the sparrow-like wars that rasped and twittered intermittently. But in the daytime there was Rabie. Rabie and Lutisha lived down in the basement. Lutish cooked and Rabie took care of the cleaning and the vegetable garden; but he was sharp at sneaking off with half his work done and going to help old Dudley with some current project—building a hen house or painting a door. He liked to listen, he liked to hear about Atlanta when Old Dudley had been there and about how guns were put together on the inside and all the other things the old man knew.

Sometimes at night they would go 'possum hunting. They never got a 'possum but Old Dudley like to get away from the ladies once in a while and hunting was a good excuse. Rabie didn't like 'possum hunting. They never got a 'possum; they never even treed one; and besides, he was mostly a water nigger. "We ain't gonna go huntin' no 'possum tonight, is we, boss? I got a lil' business I wants tuh tend tuh," he'd say when Old Dudley would start talking about hounds and guns. "Whose chickens you gonna steal tonight?"

Dudley would grin. "I reckon I be huntin' 'possum tonight," Rabie'd sigh.

Old Dudley would get out his gun and take it apart and, as Rabie cleaned the pieces, would explain the mechanism to him. Then he'd put it together again. Rabie always marveled at the way he could put it together again. Old Dudley would have liked to have explained New York to Rabie. If he could have showed it to Rabie, it wouldn't have been so big—he wouldn't have felt pressed down every time he went out in it. "It ain't so big," he would have said. "Don't let it get you down, Rabie. It's just like any other city and cities ain't all that complicated."

But they were. New York was swishing and jamming one minute and dirty and dead the next. His daughter didn't even live in a house. She lived in a building—the middle in a row of buildings all alike, all blackened—red and gray with rasp-mouthed people hanging out their windows looking at other windows and other people just like them looking back. Inside you could go up and you could go down and there were just halls that reminded you of tape measures strung out with a door every inch. He remembered he'd been dazed by the building the first week. He'd wake up expecting the halls to have changed in the night and he'd look out the door and there they stretched like dog runs. The streets were the same way. He wondered where he'd be if he walked to the end of one of them. One night he dreamed he did and ended at the end of the building—nowhere.

The next week he had become more conscious of the daughter and son-in-law and their boy—no place to be out of their way. The son-in-law was a queer one. He drove a truck and came in only on the weekends. He said "Nah" for "No" and he'd never heard of a 'possum. Old Dudley slept in the room with the boy who was sixteen and couldn't be talked to. But sometimes when the daughter and Old Dudley were alone in the apartment, she would sit down and talk to him. First she had to think of something to say. Usually it gave out before what she considered was the proper time to get up and do something else, so he would have to say something. He always tried to think of something he hadn't said before. She never listened the second time. She was seeing that her father spent his last years with his own family and not in a decayed boarding house full of old women whose heads jiggled. She was doing her duty. She had brothers and sisters who were not.

Once she took him shopping with her but he was too slow. They went in a "subway"—a railroad underneath the ground like in a big cave. People boiled out of trains and up steps and over into the streets. They rolled off the street and down steps and into trains—black and white and yellow all mixed up like vegetables in soup. Everything was boiling. The trains swished in from tunnels, up canals, and all of a sudden stopped. The people coming out pushed through the people coming in and a noise rang and the train swooped off again. Old Dudley and the daughter had to go in three different ones before they got where they were going. He wondered why people ever went out of their houses. He felt like his tongue had slipped down in his stomach. She held him by the coat sleeve and pulled him through the people.

They went on an overhead train too. She called it an "El." They had to go up on a high platform to catch it. Old Dudley looked over the rail and could see the people rushing and the automobiles rushing under him. He felt sick. He put one hand on the rail and sank down on the wooden floor of the platform. The daughter screamed and pulled him over from the edge. "Do you want to fall off and kill yourself?" she shouted.

Through a crack in the boards he could see the cars swimming in the street. "I don't care," he murmured," I don't care if I do or not."

"Come on," she said, "you'll feel better when we get home."

"Home?" he repeated. The cars moved in a rhythm below him.

"Come on," she said, "here it comes; we've just got time to make it.' They'd just had time to make all of them.

They made that one. They came back to the building and the apartment. The apartment was too tight. There was no place to be where there wasn't somebody else. The kitchen opened into the bathroom and the bathroom opened into everything else and you were always where you started from. At home there was upstairs and the basement and the river and down town in front of Fraziers . . . damn his throat.

The geranium was late today. It was ten-thirty. They usually had it out by ten-fifteen.

Somewhere down the hall a woman shrilled something unintelligible out to the street; a radio was bleating the worn music to a soap serial; and a garbage can crashed down a fire-escape. The door to the next apartment slammed and a sharp footstep clipped down the hall. "That would be the nigger," Old Dudley muttered. "The nigger with the shiny shoes." He had been there a week when the nigger moved in. That Thursday he was looking out the door at the dog run halls when this nigger went into the next apartment. He had on a grey, pin-stripe suit and a tan tie. His collar was stiff and white and made a clear-cut line next to his neck. His shoes were shiny tan—they matched his tie and his skin. Old Dudley scratched his head. He hadn't known the kind of people that would live thick in a building could afford servants. He chuckled. Lot of good a nigger in a Sunday suit would do them. Maybe this nigger would know the country around here—or maybe how to get to it. They might could hunt. They might could find them a stream somewhere. He shut the door and went to the daughter's room. "Hey! he shouted, "the folks next door got 'em a nigger. Must be gonna clean for them. You reckon they gonna keep him every day?"

She looked up from making the bed. "What are you talking about?"

"I say they got 'em a servant next door—a nigger—all dressed up in a Sunday suit."

She walked to the other side of the bed. "You must be crazy," she said. "The next apartment is vacant and besides, nobody around here can afford any servant."

"I tell you I saw him," Old Dudley snickered. "Going right in there with a tie and a white collar on—and sharp-toed shoes."

"If he went in there, he's looking at it for himself," she muttered. She went to the dresser and started fidgeting with things.

Old Dudley laughed. She could be right funny when she wanted to. "Well," he said, "I think I'll go over and see what day he gets off. Maybe I can convince him he likes to fish," and he'd slapped his pocket to make the two quarters jingle. Before he got out in the hall good, she came tearing behind him and pulled him in. "Can't you hear?" she'd yelled. "I meant what I said. He's renting that himself if he went in there. Don't you go asking him any questions or saying anything to him. I don't want any trouble with niggers."

"You mean," Old Dudley murmured, "he's gonna live next door to you?"

She shrugged. "I suppose he is. And you tend to your own business," she added. "Don't have anything to do with him."

That's just the way she'd said it. Like he didn't have any sense at all. But he'd told her off then. He'd stated his say and she knew what he meant. "You ain't been raised that way!" he'd said thundery-like. "You ain't been raised to live tight with niggers that think they're just as good as you, and you think I'd go messin' around with one er that kind! If you think I want anything to do with them, you're crazy." He had had to slow down then because his throat was tightening. She'd stood stiff up and said they lived where they could afford to live and made the best of it. Preaching to him! Then she'd walked stiff off without a word more. That was her. Trying to be holy with her shoulders curved around and her neck in the air. Like he was a fool. He knew yankees let niggers in their front doors and let them set on their sofas but he didn't know his own daughter that was raised proper would stay next door to them—and then think he didn't have no more sense than to want to mix with them. Him!

He got up and took a paper off another chair. He might as well appear to be reading when she came through again. No use having her standing there staring at him, believing she had to think up something for him to do. He looked over the paper at the window across the alley. The geranium wasn't there yet. It had never been this late before. The first day he'd seen it, he had been sitting there looking out the window at the other window and he had looked at this watch to see how long it had been since breakfast. When he looked up, it was there. It startled him. He didn't like flowers, but the geranium didn't look like a flower. It looked like the sick Grisby boy at home and it was the color of the drapes the old ladies had in the parlor and the paper bow on it looked like the one behind Lutish's uniform she wore on Sundays. Lutish had a fondness for sashes. Most niggers did, Old Dudley thought.

The daughter came through again. He had meant to be looking at the paper when she came through. "Do me a favor, will you?" she asked as if she had just thought up a favor he could do.

He hoped she didn't want him to go to the grocery again. He got lost the time before. All the blooming buildings looked alike. He nodded.

"Go down to the third floor and ask Mrs. Schmitt to lend me the shirt pattern she uses for Jake."

Why couldn't she just let him sit? She didn't need the shirt pattern. "All right," he said. "What number is it?"

"Number 10—just like this. Right below us three floors down."

Old Dudley was always afraid that when he went out in the dog runs, a door would suddenly open and one of the snipe-nosed men that hung off the window ledges in his undershirt would growl, "What are you doing here?" The door to the nigger's apartment was open and he could see a woman sitting in a chair by the window. "Yankee niggers," he muttered. She had on rimless glasses and there was a book in her lap. Niggers don't think they're dressed up till they got on glasses, Old Dudley thought. He remembered Lutish's glasses. She had saved up thirteen dollars to buy them. Then she went to the doctor and asked him to look at her eyes and tell her how thick to get the glasses. He made her look at animals' pictures through a mirror and he stuck a light through her eyes and looked in her head. Then he said she didn't need any glasses. She was so mad she burned the corn bread three days in a row, but she bought her some glasses anyway at the ten cent store. They didn't cost her but $1.98 and she wore them every Saddey. "That was niggers," Old Dudley chuckled. He realized he had made a noise, and covered his mouth with his hand. Somebody might hear him in one of the apartments.

He turned down the first flight of stairs. Down the second he heard footsteps coming up. He looked over the banisters and saw it was a woman—a fat woman with an apron on. From the top, she looked kind er like Mrs. Benson at home. He wondered if she would speak to him. When they were four steps from each other, he darted a glance at her but she wasn't looking at him. When there were no steps between them, his eyes fluttered up for an instant and she was looking at him cold in the face. Then she was past him. She hadn't said a word. He felt heavy in his stomach.

He went down four flights instead of three. Then he went back up one and found number 10. Mrs. Schmitt said O. K., wait a minute and she'd get the pattern. She sent one of the children back to the door with it. The child didn't say anything.

Old Dudley started back up the stairs. He had to take it more slowly. It tired him going up. Everything tired him, looked like. Not like having Rabie to do his running for him. Rabie was a light-footed nigger. He could sneak in a hen-house 'thout even the hens knowing it and get him the fattest fryer in there and not a squawk. Fast too. Dudley had always been slow on his feet. It went that way with fat people. He remembered one time him and Rabie was hunting quail over near Molton. They had 'em a hound dog that could find a covey quickern any fancy pointer going. He wasn't no good at bringing them back but he could find them every time and then set like a dead stump while you aimed at the birds. This one time the hound stopped cold-still. "Dat gonna be a big 'un," Rabie whispered, "I feels it." Old Dudley raised the gun slowly as they walked along. He had to be careful of the pine needles. They covered the ground and made it slick. Rabie shifted his weight from side to side, lifting and setting his feet on the waxen needles with unconscious care.

He looked straight ahead and moved forward swiftly. Old Dudley kept one eye ahead and one on the ground. It would slope and he would be sliding forward dangerously or in pulling himself up an incline, he would slide back down.

"Ain't I better get dem birds dis time, boss?" Rabie suggested. "You ain't never easy on yo' feets on Monday. If you falls in one dem slopes, you gonna scatter dem birds fo' you gits dat gun up."

Old Dudley wanted to get the covey. He could er knocked four out it easy. "I'll get 'em," he muttered. He lifted the gun to his eye and leaned forward. Something slipped beneath him and he slid backward on his heels. The gun went off and the covey sprayed into the air.

"Dem was some mighty fine birds we let get away from us," Rabie sighed.

"We'll find another covey," Old Dudley said, "now get me out of this damn hole."

He could er got five er those birds if he hadn't fallen. He could er shot 'em off like cans on a fence. He drew one hand back to his ear and extended the other forward. He could er knocked 'em out like clay pigeons. Bang! A squeak on the staircase made him wheel around—his arms still holding the invisible gun. The nigger was clipping up the steps toward him, an amused smile stretching his trimmed mustache. Old Dudley's mouth dropped open. The nigger's lips were pulled down like he was trying to keep from laughing. Old Dudley couldn't move. He stared at the clear-cut line the nigger's collar made against his skin.

"What are you hunting, old timer?" the negro asked in a voice that sounded like a nigger's laugh and a white man's sneer.

Old Dudley felt like a child with a pop-pistol. His mouth was open and his tongue was rigid in the middle of it. Right below his knees felt hollow. His feet slipped and he slid three steps and landed sitting down.

"You better be careful," the negro said. "You could easily hurt yourself on these steps," and he held out his hand for Old Dudley to pull up on. It was a long narrow hand and the tips of the fingernails were clean and cut squarely. They looked like they might have been filed. Old Dudley's hands hung between his knees. The nigger took him by the arm and pulled up. "Whew!" he gasped, "you're heavy. Give a little help here." Old Dudley's knees unbended and he staggered up. The nigger had him by the arm. "I'm going up anyway," he said. "I'll help you." Old Dudley looked frantically around. The steps behind him seemed to close up. He was walking with the nigger up the stairs. The nigger was waiting for him on each step. "So you hunt?" the nigger was saying. "Well, let's see. I went deer hunting once. I believe we used a Dodson 38 to get those deer. What do you use?"

Old Dudley was staring through the shiny tan shoes. "I use a gun," he mumbled.

"I like to fool with guns better than hunting," the nigger was saying. "Never was much at killing anything. Seems kind of a shame to deplete the game reserve. I'd collect guns if I had the time and the money, though." He was

waiting on every step till Old Dudley got on it. He was explaining guns and makes. He had on grey socks with a black fleck in them. They finished the stairs. The nigger walked down the hall with him, holding him by the arm. It probably looked like he had his arm locked in the nigger's.

They went right up to Old Dudley's door. Then the nigger asked, "You from around here?"

Old Dudley shook his head looking at the door. He hadn't looked at the nigger yet. All the way up the stairs, he hadn't looked at the nigger. "Well," the nigger said, "it's a swell place—once you get used to it." He patted Old Dudley on the back and went into his own apartment. Old Dudley went into his. The pain in his throat was all over his face now, leaking out his eyes.

He shuffled to the chair by the window and sank down in it. His throat was going to pop. His throat was going to pop on account of a nigger—a damn nigger that patted him on the back and called him "old timer." Him that knew such as that couldn't be. Him that had come from a good place. A good place. A place where such as that couldn't be. His eyes felt strange in their sockets. They were swelling in them and in a minute there wouldn't be any room left for them there. He was trapped in this place where niggers could call you "old timer." He wouldn't be trapped. He wouldn't be. He rolled his head on the back of the chair to stretch his neck that was too full.

A man was looking at him. A man was in the window across the alley looking straight at him. The man was watching him cry. That was where the geranium was supposed to be and it was a man in his undershirt, watching him cry, waiting to watch his throat pop. Old Dudley looked back at the man. It was supposed to be the geranium. The geranium belonged there, not the man. "Where is the geranium?" he called out of his tight throat.

"What you cryin' for?" the man asked. "I ain't never seen a man cry like that."

"Where is the geranium?" Old Dudley quavered. "It ought to be there. Not you."

"This is my window," the man said. "I got a right to set here if I want to."

"Where is it?" Old Dudley shrilled. There was just a little room left in his throat.

"It fell off if it's any of your business," the man said.

Old Dudley got up and peered over the window ledge. Down in the alley, way six floors down, he could see a cracked flower pot scattered over a spray of dirt and something pink sticking out of a green paper bow. It was down six floors. Smashed down six floors.

Old Dudley looked at the man who was chewing gum and waiting to see the throat pop. "You shouldn't have put it so near the ledge," he murmured. "Why don't you pick it up?"

"Why don't you, pop?"

Old Dudley stared at the man who was where the geranium should have been.

He would. He'd go down and pick it up. He'd put it in his own window

and look at it all day if he wanted to. He turned from the window and left the room. He walked slowly down the dog run and got to the steps. The steps dropped down like a deep wound in the floor. They opened up through a gap like a cavern and went down and down. And he had gone up them a little behind the nigger. And the nigger had pulled him up on his feet and kept his arm in his and gone up the steps with him and said he hunted deer, "old timer," and seen him holding a gun that wasn't there and sitting on the steps like a child. He had shiny tan shoes and he was trying not to laugh and the whole business was laughing. There'd probably be niggers with black flecks in their socks on every step, pulling down their mouths so as not to laugh. The steps dropped down and down. He wouldn't go on those steps. He wouldn't go on them again. He wouldn't go down and have niggers pattin' him on the back. He went back to the room and the window and looked down at the geranium.

The man was sitting over where it should have been. "I ain't seen you pickin' it up," he said.

Old Dudley stared at the man.

"I seen you before," the man said. "I seen you settin' in that old chair every day, starin' out the window, looking in my apartment. What I do in my apartment is my business, see? I don't like people looking at what I do."

It was at the bottom of the alley with its roots in the air.

"I only tell people once," the man said and left the window.

DAVID CORNEL DeJONG:

From A Roster of Fair Names

I

Only a cable from heaven could say: "To Simon Bolera. Your
progeny is neither horse nor mule really." Singular is it not
that one so simple could have hibred so faultily with
landladies and chambermaids and paid his rent withal?

An unmarried aspect with some nicknacks of features, nails,
minutiae of eyes and remotest ideas in a basket with sand
in the attic of his mind, allowing his dreams a dollar
a month, and deducted that fecklessly from his income-tax.

Was a staunch . . . but of course. Deflected never one inch
along his lap-eared years, exerted not a single hair,
so became the finest rug for any golden wedding or
a demonstration of the potencies of newest floating soaps.

Alas girdles won't sub. for youth, hopeful though one turns
when ordering new seeds. Indifferences and oblivions marked
him like a map whereon Mussolini stumbled with his chin,
and so he was arraigned for abetting a European dream.

II

Boatswain (amateur) Orth was still hallucinating in
a canoe when the whale bulged by. Used to be that
the finest razors sliced his daily love, though rationing
lust was easier done with prayers crooned out loud.

All along his ambitions he built the whitest bungalows,
being a constructive gent; and over again he memorized
the decalogue, until an alien toytrain cracked up
where his aorta prepared itself for a preview diastole.

Played solitaire too long perhaps, but frolicked in proxy
with the avenue's flaxen girls when lush at night . . .
Yet patched pants on every line strung between Congregation-
alist elms proclaimed his neat New England ancestry.

Important man. With grave ribs. Deviated once only
because a month of hasty folderoling cauterized one's soul.
When he too became a candle on a window sill to warn some
alcoholic captain where the Rock of Ages lay submerged.

III

Oh, Baxter, the marcelled salesman . . . He
found a home beside a babbling brook
and a civic-landscaped grove; ah, the cactus in
his sunroom was always jabbed full of tender silver christs.

Started humbly with only a flag for loincloth,
could not then afford hibiscus in season. One
wife nosed him out, but the other, the fatter, and
richer, he certainly allowed a furnished room in his dreams.

Artistically he took notes for a lullaby with
a mixed chorus of window cleaners, and rocked
one other ambition on his nimble knees among ladies
of the best décor. But always there came a war it seems.

Always some man in the White House, and always,
ALWAYS some F. B. I. peering across his wicket.
Always came Peace with a basket of prosperity and joy
in the very hour that everything ended dustily with Baxter.

IV

"When we swandived into Goose Lake and thought we
wouldn't survive it, we broke up with death who tried
to lay us with fancy rosebud lips in a casket, when we
saw how it was we were converted to reincarnation.

Lulu and me, indubitable, logical, top-heavy Jones.
John Jones of the juggernaut Jones. Avaunt idle fancies
and come hither grave melancholy if your uniform is correct
and the stripes number more than three, ah come hither."

For relief maybe just an insolent stark-naked chimpanzee
walking a rope. Oh he, Jones was fey and fawn, supple and svelte.
His house was reached by nineteen ladders and on petit chairs
his embryo children sat salaaming to their potent father.

Sleek he was like mackerels and eels. Came upon himself testing
morals on hot ingot, always his back to Saint Paul;
and when the 1944 cached him in a stainless steel
jeep, he penned Lulu a great farewell with a suppurating Jap.

V

Jerome Abernathy missed the boat in July when infamously
arrested for picking a four-leaved clover. The boat sprouted
wings and forgot to die, in spite of prediction, and Jerome said
the church was to blame for installing a fern as preacher.

Jerome said much, sometimes denying Abernathy, sometimes his
Albertina, or Rosamund with the wired teeth, Saulus with
the carp mouth, Nimrod adrift on floating ribs. But each
he wouldn't part with for a million, so he sold them for a dime.

Agrarian by physique only, his kin embroidered slippers and slips
with violets, then much in vogue because peace was in the land.
Tomorrows followed in a roller-coaster—Voila, what behooves
it God to drink blood when he is the fountain of life?

Disrobing came upon his navel mocking him; on Labor Day in
an alley he did mayhem to his creeds. Some sprinkled ashes on him
but the wisest hung him in a tree, where he dangles like a kite,
shows street directions, predicts frosts, prognosticates wars.

VI

Sing, Rufus Colarmes, sing Heilige Nacht, Stille Nacht.
Endow Monsieur with your faith. Coughed, didn't you, when
the door stayed ajar, swallowed your wings, and never knew
how delirious the night was into which you had drifted.

Oh Rufus, minnesinger supreme, and you got the blues
because the ferret you haunted with wouldn't conceal where
you had crawled with your quarry. Buttercake breasts,
non-pareil nipples, and the soft tuftings that frenzied

you from toes to chin. Should have exalted, Sir . . . Should
have rallied, or never sobered up again. A fat hip, a stringy
ankle, the ferret kicked dead, and the voice fallen from tenor
to muck, after the larynx short-circuited with the unsavory loins.

Tell Monsieur about your pinkish boyhood instead, or sing
of course, Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht from a dais with lilies.
Oh, they're pointing at you? But that's only because your trousers
are striped, and the skin on your cheeks no longer covers the bones.

GROVER SMITH:

Observations on Eliot's "Death by Water"

"Death by Water," the short fourth section of T. S. Eliot's *Waste Land,* presents like the rest of the poem, certain difficulties of interpretation. No one would find this fact astonishing; but anyone might honestly be dismayed to perceive that, though a literal meaning of "Death by Water" is perfectly evident, this meaning has little apparent relation to *The Waste Land* as a whole. Phlebas the Phoenician, who is the subject of the passage, is earlier mentioned in "The Burial of the Dead." According to one of Mr. Eliot's notes, furthermore, "the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician Sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples."[1] It should nevertheless seem that, even when provided with this information, one may still be in the dark concerning the precise function of the drowning episode.

I think it helpful, in order to ascertain something more about the significance of "Death by Water," that one should examine the lines in Section I where the Phoenician is introduced. Madame Sosostris, the clairvoyante, tells fortunes by cards; in "The Burial of the Dead," she turns, first of all, "your card, the drowned Phoenician sailor," and she exclaims: "(Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!)" Then, a little later, she says:

> And here is the one-eyed merchant, and this card,
> Which is blank, is something he carries on his back,
> Which I am forbidden to see. I do not find
> The Hanged Man. Fear death by water.

For an analysis of these half-dozen lines, Mr. Eliot's note, which I have already quoted, may be put to practical use. Everyone has already noticed the allusion to Shakespeare's *Tempest,* where Ariel sings:

> Full fathom five thy father lies;
> Of his bones are coral made;
> Those are pearls that were his eyes:
> Nothing of him that doth fade,
> But doth suffer a sea change
> Into something rich and strange.
> Sea nymphs hourly ring his knell:
> (Ding-dong.)
> Hark! now I hear them,—Ding-dong, bell.

There is an allusion also, of course, to Ferdinand Prince of Naples, to whom Ariel's song is addressed; but it is not Ferdinand who is supposed to have been

[1] This quotation from Eliot, and those to be made subsequently, are from COLLECTED POEMS of T. S. ELIOT, 1909-1935: by permission of Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., publishers.

drowned—it is his *father,* Alonso. Yet Mr. Eliot identifies Ferdinand with the Phoenician Sailor, who is to find death by water in Section IV of *The Waste Land:*

> Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead,
> Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell
> And the profit and loss.
> A current under sea
> Picked his bones in whispers. As he rose and fell
> He passed the stages of his age and youth
> Entering the whirlpool.
> Gentile or Jew
> O you who turn the wheel and look to windward,
> Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you.

May it not follow that Ferdinand Prince of Naples is to be identified with his father, the king? But he is also the one-eyed merchant, who sells currants. Hugh Ross Williamson, in *The Poetry of T. S. Eliot,* has pointed out that there is a play on words here: *"current* under sea" recalls the "currants" of the merchant's trade. I believe that "Death by Water" contains other puns, which I shall specify in due course.

Before proceeding to more technical matters, I should like to consolidate the facts available at this point. If (to take Mr. Eliot at his word) the Phoenician Sailor "is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples," perhaps the character of the former may be defined by comparison with what is known about the character of the latter. Ferdinand (who, it must be remembered, is also Tiresias) is affiliated with the uncertainty, the anxiety, and the hopelessness common to all that dwell in the desolate land. He muses on death, and, by implication, he fears it; the death he fears is the one his father died. In *The Tempest,* while, in Shakespeare's words, he is "Sitting on a bank / Weeping again the king my father's wreck," (a line which Mr. Eliot has only slightly altered for "The Fire Sermon"), Ferdinand Prince of Naples is approached by Ariel, who sings the lyric which I have cited. It is clear that Ferdinand's apprehensions (in *The Waste Land*) should be considered along with the injunction of Madame Sosostris: "Fear death by water." Death by water actually comes to him in his character as the Phoenician Sailor. This happens because of what Madame Sosostris has said a moment before: "I do not find / The Hanged Man." Because the Hanged Man is not part of Ferdinand's destiny, he suffers drowning—he, and the other male characters in *The Waste Land.* The meaning of all this is quite plain. The Hanged Man is Christ, or the hanged god of Frazer's *Golden Bough;* since the Hanged Man is spiritual salvation, death by water must be—not damnation, in a materialistic and infidel world—but physical death, the loss of individuality through decomposition. The exact nature of death by water is thus explained by a modern notion—that death is an obliteration of personality and a biological redistribution of physical matter. That the drowned Phoenician Sailor, however, is not only Ferdinand but also Ferdinand's father, is suggested by Mr. Eliot's having borrowed a line

from Ariel's song. It is natural that this secondary identification should be made; the lapse of the Sailor into the whirlpool, which is the great reservoir of creative nature, recalls the biological cycle, where the material elements of one generation pass into animal or vegetable life and are finally made a part of the bodies of men in after times. It recalls also the cycle of human life and death; even as Ferdinand's father dies, so will die Ferdinand himself: the prince, and (through him as Tiresias) all men, can see their own fate in the fate of their predecessors. The phrase "you who turn the wheel" refers, as does "whirlpool," to those who are still alive, who carry on the reproductive process; it refers likewise to the Wheel that Madame Sosostris finds among her cards (the Buddhist Wheel of Destiny), and to the crowds of people that, in "The Burial of the Dead" are seen walking round in a ring—the inhabitants of the Waste Land. One word in "Death by Water" is of preëminent importance. This is "picked": "A current under sea / Picked his bones in whispers." It means not only "stripped" but also "chose." The current, a life-stream, as it were, transferring the stuff of productive nature from one physical form to another, *chooses* elements and recombines them. The word "passed" seems to mean "lived" as well as "relived": man dies through all his life; his strength *rises* in youth and *falls* in age, until at last he enters into bodily death. "As he rose and fell / He passed the stages of his age and youth / Entering the whirlpool."

The Phoenician Sailor corresponds also to the one-eyed "Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant / Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants. . . . " Cleanth Brooks, in his interesting chapter on *The Waste Land*,[2] has said that the merchant's week-end invitation to "the Metropole," in "The Fire Sermon," is evidently a homosexual one. I feel that Mr. Brooks is quite right in this conjecture, which perfectly accords with the allusion, at the end of Section III, to the "unholy loves" denounced in Saint Augustine's *Confessions*. This interpretation is furthermore applicable to "Death by Water." The merchant, it should be observed, carries on his back something, represented by a blank card, which Madame Sosostris is "forbidden to see." If this "something" is his sterile homosexuality, it is fitting that the card should be "blank"— that is, *fruitless*— and that the female should be ignorant of his concern with it. The blank card may, it is true, signify also the mystery of death, which the merchant meets in "Death by Water." Now, Mr. Eugenides is of a double character: he is a merchant and he is an homosexual. As a business man, and as Phlebas the Phoenician, he "Forgot the cry of gulls [another pun: "gulls" is Elizabethan English for "dupes"], . . . / And the profit and loss." But the words "current" and "whirlpool" may have a sexual (or homosexual) connotation; compare the idea of "dark tides of the blood," and (what is more important, since Mr. Eliot's note to "Death by Water" refers to Saint Augustine, and possibly to Augustine's early, sinful years in Carthage, which was formerly a Phoenician colony) the several passages in the *Confessions* where vice is called a *torrent*. I think especially of one in Book III, Chapter 2, where Augustine, discussing the "vein of friendship," cries out: "But whither does it go, and whither flows it? Why

[2] Cleanth Brooks, *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*, Chapel Hill, 1939.

does it run down into a torrent of bubbling pitch, into vast tides of loathsome vice, until, being brought low and estranged from heavenly purity, it is of its own will turned and transmuted into them?"

The meaning of the name Phlebas, by which the Phoenician is known in "Death by Water," is derived, I am disposed to think, from the Greek *phléps, phlebós,* a vein. This would fit very well with the common expression "vein of commerce" in connection with the Phoenician's rôle as a trader. But even more remarkable is the fact that the Greek word has another meaning, which is the same as that of *phallós*—a most rewarding fact, if it confirms my theory that the Phoenician Sailor represents the commerce of *lust* as well as the commerce of materialism.

So it is, I think, that "Death by Water" should be explicated. This death is a death of the soul, though a rebirth of the body in the course of biological retransformation. Such a rebirth is in no wise satisfactory to men desiring personal life after death. But, to retain identity after death, only one way is indicated—salvation through Christ. One must find the "Hanged Man," as neither Madame Sosostris, nor Ferdinand, nor Mr. Eugenides, nor the Phoenician Sailor can do. It will be remembered that the Sibyl, in the passage taken from the *Satyricon* of Petronius Arbiter and quoted by Mr. Eliot as his epigraph to *The Waste Land,* wishes, more than anything else, *to be dead.* Yet she, participating in the poem through the seers, Tiresias and Madame Sosostris, can find no means of escaping from her prison (she is kept in a bottle, because, like Tithonus, she has asked for prolonged life but not prolonged youth, and has shriveled to dwarfish size).[3] The prison of Tiresias and Madame Sosostris is the Waste Land. They can die, but they cannot leave the world; they are bound to an existence that periodically, by physical death, enters new incarnations or vegetable forms, but they have no spiritual rebirth *out of the world,* though they would leave it, as the Sibyl would leave her flask. The death they desire is more than the simple extinction longed for by the Sibyl: it is a death that shall bring life *in their own identity.* The means to this are obvious. These people, as I interpret *The Waste Land,* must turn from the errors of lust and materialism, and must find grace. They can do so, no matter who they are:

> Gentile or Jew
> O you who turn the wheel and look to windward,
> Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall
> as you.

"Gentile *or* Jew"—to whom Saint Paul assures, in Romans II:

> Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil; of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;
> But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good; to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:
> For there is no respect of persons with God.

[3] Compare Ovid's *Metamorphoses, XIV.* It is interesting that the similar theme has been elaborated by Aldous Huxley in *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan,* the title of which comes from Tennyson's "Tithonus."

Phlebas is a Phoenician, a Semite; but his example can teach anyone, as can the antithetical example of Christ, to seek liberation from the Waste Land of no purpose and no peace.

I am aware that certain critics, including Cleanth Brooks[4] and Elizabeth Drew[5], are inclined to look upon "Death by Water" as an enactment of the fertility rite, described in Jessie L. Weston's *From Ritual to Romance,* in which a papyrus effigy of the head of Adonis was cast into the sea at Alexandria, and, having been carried by a current to Byblos, was retrieved there, after seven days, by the votaries of the god. This event was taken to symbolize the death and rebirth of the vegetation spirit. Now, considering Mr. Eliot's dependence upon Miss Weston's book, it would be foolishness to pass over the analogy between this ceremony and the event of "Death by Water." It should be observed, however, that the death and rebirth of Adonis are not primarily spiritual but physical. The resemblance of the fertility ritual to the Christian celebration of the death and resurrection of Christ ceases at the point where one considers the *spiritual* meaning of Christ's resurrection. I am sure that "Death by Water" does indeed partly signify the great cycle of natural rebirth—the rebirth of the parent in the child, the rebirth of the year with the return of spring (to effect which was the design of the homeopathic ritual described above), and the rebirth of the flesh in grave-grass or fish-scale. This is all, however, that is meant by the rites of the Adonis cults. "Death by Water" is hence really death, not life—if one require, as I think Mr. Eliot does, that life shall mean a life of the soul. This last is promised, and it is heralded by the shower at the beginning of *The Waste Land* and by the thunderstorm near the end; its law is in the command, *"Give, sympathise, control."* It would be a mistake to suppose that "Death by Water" were a passage of triumphant life: it is a passage of spiritual death.

Some interest may be attached to the literary origins of the drowned Phoenician Sailor. "Death by Water" is a modified translation from the closing lines of Mr. Eliot's poem "Dans le Restaurant," which was published in 1920. The French version reads as follows:

> Phlébas, le Phénicien, pendant quinze jours noyé,
> Oubliait les cris des mouettes et la houle de Cornouaille,
> Et les profits et les pertes, et la cargaison d'étain:
> Un courant de sous-mer l'emporta très loin,
> Le repassant aux étapes de sa vie antérieure.
> Figurez-vous donc, c'était un sort pénible;
> Cependant, ce fut jadis un bel homme, de haute taille.

It may be seen that with neither "mouettes" nor "courant" is there a possibility of a pun, as there is with "gulls" and "current." The scene here is laid just off the coast of Cornwall, from which the Phoenician vessel is bearing a cargo of tin. It is well to note the absence, from the French, of the phrase "Gentile or

[4] Brooks, *op. cit.*

[5] Elizabeth Drew, in collaboration with John L. Sweeney, *Directions in Modern Poetry,* New York, 1940.

Jew." Though the name Phlébas is apparently of Mr. Eliot's own coinage, both the French and the English passages may, with good reason, I think, be referred to the subjoined extracts from Book IV of William Morris's *Life and Death of Jason*—the song of Orpheus, to the sea:

"The thin bright-eyed Phoenician
Thou drawest to thy waters wan,
With ruddy eve and golden morn
Thou temptest him, until, forlorn,
Unburied, under alien skies
Cast up ashore his body lies.
"Yea, whoso sees thee from his door,
Must ever long for more and more;
Nor will the beechen bowl suffice,
Or homespun robe of little price,
Or hood well-woven of the fleece
Undyed, or unspiced wine of Greece;
So sore his heart is set upon
Purple, and gold, and cinnamon;
For as thou cravest, so he craves,
Until he rolls beneath thy waves.
Nor in some landlocked, unknown bay,
Can satiate thee for one day.

. . . . . .

"Nor yet, O sea, shalt thou be cursed,
If at thy hands we gain the worst,
And, wrapt in water, roll about
Blind-eyed, unheeding song or shout,
Within thine eddies far from shore,
Warmed by no sunlight any more.

. . . . . .

"So, if thou hast a mind to slay,
Fair prize thou hast of us to-day;
And if thou hast a mind to save,
Great praise and honour shalt thou have;
But whatso thou wilt do with us,
Our end shall not be piteous,
Because our memories shall live
When folk forget the way to drive
The black keel through the heaped-up sea,
And half dried up thy waters be."

There is no doubt that Mr. Eliot has had in his hands *The Life and Death of Jason:* in his essay on Andrew Marvell, published in 1921, *the year after* "Dans le Restaurant," he quotes part of the nymph's song to Hylas—also from Book IV of Morris's poem.[6] The principal similarity between the song of Orpheus and Mr. Eliot's passages on the drowned Phoenician seems to consist in a characterization of the Phoenician as a merchant, who is drowned and sucked under by

[6] Curiously enough, the Thames barge, of which Mr. Eliot writes in Section III, bring to mind William Morris's "Ark," a great, awkward craft in which Morris made excursions up the Thames from Hammersmith to his Oxfordshire house. See *The Collected Works of William Morris*, London, 1912, XIII, xxxiv-xxxv.

the sea.[7] There is some affinity between the incident thus described and two that occur in the *Aeneid,* the death of Palinurus in Book V and the death of Misenus in Book VI.

It is possible for one to be continuously revising his ideas about T. S. Eliot's *Waste Land.* Not the least interesting quality of the poem is its power to produce in every critic, in every reader, a different sensation at each reading. The section "Death by Water" has been, for me, the key to the whole work. Critics agree as little on the significance of this section as on that of the remainder. It might seem that at this late date there could be no chance of their concurring in a fixed interpretation; each thinks that he has resolved (or nearly resolved) the poem, and each is jealous of the discoveries made by others. From precisely such rival investigations, however, there may eventually come some unity of opinion, brought about by the understanding of many clews leading to a common solution. The purpose of the foregoing pages has been to facilitate this understanding, rather than to invent a new construction of *The Waste Land.*

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[7] Mr. Eliot may have been led to *The Life and Death of Jason* through a passage in James Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson* (London, Oxford University Press, 1942, I, 305). Morris's story is founded upon the tradition to which Johnson refers—that of the Argonauts, commemorated by Apollonius Rhodius, Valerius Flaccus, and other classical writers. Boswell and Johnson, it should be noted, had the following conversation while in a boat on the Thames; the italics are mine:

"On Saturday, July 30 [1763], Dr. Johnson and I took a sculler at the Temple-stairs, and set out for Greenwich. I asked him if he really thought a knowledge of the Greek and Latin languages an essential requisite to a good education. JOHNSON. 'Most certainly, Sir; for those who know them have a very great advantage over those who do not. Nay, Sir, it is wonderful what a difference learning makes upon people even in the common intercourse of life, which does not appear to be much connected with it.' 'And yet, (said I) people go through the world very well, and carry on the business of life to good advantage, without learning.' JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, that may be true in cases where learning cannot possibly be of any use; for instance, this boy rows us as well without learning, *as if he could sing the song of Orpheus to the Argonauts,* who were the first sailors.' He then called to the boy, 'What would you give, my lad, to know about the Argonauts?' 'Sir, (said the boy,) I would give what I have.' Johnson was much pleased with his answer, and we gave him a double fare. . . .

"We landed at the Old Swan, and walked to Billingsgate, where *we took oars, and moved smoothly along the silver Thames.* . . ."

A further odd coincidence lies in the fact that Johnson's wife was formerly a *Mrs. Porter,* who was, by her previous marriage, the mother of a *daughter,* Lucy Porter. The reader will recall Mr. Eliot's lines on "Mrs. Porter," in Section III. I hope that it will never be necessary to identify Sweeney with Dr. Johnson.

CHARLES CHILD WALCUTT:

Naturalism in 1946: Dreiser and Farrell

THEODORE DREISER: *The Bulwark.* Doubleday, Doran.
JAMES T. FARRELL: *Bernard Clare.* Vanguard.

We have seen the term romanticism belabored until it was worn out, until now we have projects in the discrimination of romanticisms. A word gets us into this sort of bog when we ignore what the semanticists (and, before them, people with clear heads) have been saying and saying—namely, that a noun is a classification; it does not reproduce an object but classifies that object in terms of some one or few of its qualities. Things usually

have hundreds of qualities which are not touched by the nouns that we use to classify them. We call people pedestrians, Republicans, scholars, or Protestants, and we have constantly to guard against the conviction in our bosoms that these terms somehow designate the whole man. Of course they do not. Nor does "naturalism" tell all about a novel.

"Naturalism" indicates (classifies) certain tendencies in the novel which are variously revealed in its structure, its content, its style, and its philosophy. Naturalism has confusing affiliations with "science," with Darwinism, and with reform. The problem is to identify these tendencies and affiliations historically, for ultimately we should be able to show what qualities are essentially naturalistic and what are merely accidentally or historically associated with what we call the naturalistic movement. The essential criterion of naturalism is an underlying philosophy of materialism. Attempts to embody this philosophy in the novel led to experiments with form which inevitably abandoned the structures that had been developed under the aegis of orthodox dualism. This trend was an "essential" outgrowth of the philosophy, but the various forms which were developed could not have been predicted, cannot be traced strictly to the philosophy (because they are mixed with so many other influences and ideas), and so must be considered "accidental" naturalistic qualities. The same may be said of "naturalistic" style and subject matter.

The fact that science is systematic, factual, even pedestrian in manner, has no simple bearing on the style of a novelist who intends to be "scientific." The interplay of science and style is perfectly fraught, not to say bristling, with false analogies. Flaubert was scientific to the extent of cutting through certain orthodox or conventional attitudes; he was also scientific in the closeness of his observation. Science is a part of the atmosphere out of which *Madame Bovary* was precipitated. But if we draw back a few steps we see that science has nothing essential to do with the sophistication of Flaubert's style, the irony enveloping his theme, the point of view, the impeccable form, or the remorseless insights. These can be found elsewhere in the history of literature. If one dared use the word romanticism after the opening paragraph of this review, one might say that the "anti-romanticism of *Madame Bovary* is characteristic of an age of science,"—but what, then, of Zola? Zola's "naturalism," as every college student knows, is exuberantly romantic in temper. It rhapsodizes, as it were, in an ecstasy of light-which-is-knowledge. Another materialist could live in gloom as he pondered a universe alien to man and mechanical—and his style would presumably lack the exuberance of Zola's.

Historically Dreiser is not merely associated with the naturalistic movement; it is nearer the truth to say that his particular work, with its particular qualities, has more than the work of any other American writer served as the pattern of what naturalism concretely is. It is here that the confusion between what is essential and what is accidental arises. In *Sister Carrie* the most strictly naturalistic element is the sense of cosmic purposelessness. The novel is structurally naturalistic, however, in that it is not composed of a dramatic conflict but of straight-line movements: Carrie goes up. Hurstwood goes down. The up movement is an example of the amoral accidents of real (as opposed to Sundayschool) life. The down movement is the step-by-step disintegration of an individual by forces beyond his control. The observation in *Sister Carrie* is no closer than Balzac's or Flaubert's, and it is far less sophisticated. The subject matter was new in America, and shocking to Mrs. Doubleday, but no one could say it was an inevitable expression of scientific materialism. And most important, the style of this and of Dreiser's later novels is "naturalistic" only because the word makes us think of Dreiser's novels. Dreiser's heavy periods are no more essentially naturalistic than Zola's eloquence or Stephen Crane's impressionism.

More specifically, Dreiser's naturalism consists of the following elements: 1) a sense of the unplumbed and ineffable mystery of life in a cosmos that is not anthropocentric and does not reveal purpose or order particularly oriented to man—if indeed there be any purpose or order in it; 2) a profound mistrust of the orthodox morality by which the Haves of society maintain their ascendancy; 3) a deep insight into the sociology of certain ideals and values current in the society that he observed,—the values held by Drouet, Cowperwood, and Clyde Griffiths; 4) a rather hazy notion that ideas and emotions are

"chemic," plus a fondness for biological similes turning on the idea of struggle for existence. In *Sister Carrie, The Financier,* and *An American Tragedy* these elements achieved expression in new and significant structures, in novels, that is, which embodied these elements in forms that it would have been impossible for a traditional dualist to produce. These new forms were the most striking evidences of the new thought underlying them.

Dreiser's compassion, his feeling for common people, and his touchingly naive pathos are not obviously related to scientific materialism—except insofar as they derive from his sense of being adrift in the cosmos. Alfred North Whitehead contends that scientific materialism poses unanswerable questions about the relation of "matter" and "will" and therefore presents a predicament from which the artist of all people seeks to escape. It is worth noting in passing that pure materialistic determinism was a *cul de sac* for the novel. The emotional, stylistic, and ethical elements which make Zola, Norris, and Dreiser significant are not "essentially" naturalistic. They derive from far back in the tradition of western civilization. Very little progress indeed was made along the lines proposed by Zola in *The Experimental Novel*—of reducing human behavior to chemical formulæ and thus perfectly conquering nature and eliminating the unpredictable from life. That unpredictable is still the main stuff of literature.

The Bulwark, Dreiser's first novel in twenty years, deals with three generations of Quakers in Pennsylvania. They go from piety to prosperity to perdition. The protagonist is Solon, of the middle generation, who gets rich, clings to the Inner Light, but sees his children drawn away into various forms of vice and vanity because they cannot resist the material attractions of fine clothes and automobiles, and the physical attractions of sex. The novel has a double theme. Sociologically, it shows that the control exercised by a religion of simplicity like Quakerism is powerless against the lures of American materialism. Within Solon it shows the same conflict: Solon contributes to the downfall of his children because he thinks he can serve both God and Mammon. By serving Mammon he makes a lot of money, and it is this which opens up the world of ostentation and vice to his children. If they had all lived in poverty, they would not have been Tempted. Yet, paradoxically, it is Solon's Quaker background that makes him sober, industrious, and trustworthy—so that he rises rapidly to affluence as a banker.

This is the first novel in which Dreiser has been confronted with the problem of advancing four or five separate actions (his others focus on one person), and the result is not fortunate. It is, to begin with, difficult for a writer of Dreiser's diffuseness to deal with the birth, early education, adolescence, and "end" of five children and their parents in less than four hundred pages. He has performed this task as it were through the small end of a telescope: occasional incidents are dramatized, but most are recounted hastily, in a bewildering succession of two- and three-page chapters. Characters are developed only to be dropped; others live and die without coming to life; others are introduced, forgotten, and then embarrassingly revived for a new occasion. This *un*form reveals a technique that could not keep pace with changing times. In the historical context of 1900, a straight-line presentation of one incident after another was striking and powerful. Given a prevailing notion of form, the denial of it becomes a form. But without that-from-which-it-revolts the same work would be only chaotic. There is, in this matter, a dialectic at work; and whereas in 1900 Dreiser expressed a powerful antithesis, in 1946 the same kind of form is irrelevant because several new syntheses have nullified the tension in which it formerly participated. But *The Bulwark* is not as well constructed as the early straight-line naturalistic novels; it lacks even their relentless movement toward disaster; and ponderous as that movement may have been in for example, *An American Tragedy,* it had the devastating power of utter conviction. It carried a new Idea.

Today it will be asked, with genuine bewilderment, whether *The Bulwark* is naturalistic. The question would not have been asked in 1900, when it would have struck the pious reader that here was a shockingly detached treatment of moral issues: a boy who strays into vice because he has been repressed at home, who commits suicide rather than bear the shame of having been in jail, who has, in fine, not been equipped to judge wisely and so

is not judged by the author. To the world of 1900 this would have seemed trifling with the concept of moral responsibility. Today it is commonplace. Dreiser's position as one of the very great American novelists will not be affected by the weakness of *The Bulwark*. One shudders to think what Frank Norris might have written if he had lived. It is not surprising that Dreiser could not remake his mind and his art to keep up with trends he once led.

James T. Farrell's naturalism, which like Dreiser's accounts for only a fraction of his art, is likewise of two sorts—theoretical and historical. He writes from materialistic philosophical premises; he has clear sociological theories about the nature of the self; he has well founded convictions on economics and politics. These theoretical elements make Farrell a materialist and hence a naturalist. It is scarcely necessary to point out that they alone do not distinguish him from hundreds of other writers who are not his literary bedfellows. Historically, Farrell is in the naturalistic tradition because his writing exhibits a number of the "accidental" qualities that appeared in the writing of early naturalists like Dreiser. Some of these are the use of characters and situations tending toward the sordid, upon whom the influence of environment is strong and obvious; the absence of plot, leaving a purely agglomerative chronological structure which is presented as a sampling of the character's whole life rather than as a selected, integrated sequence; and a tone comprised of irony, bitterness, and moral indignation at the failure of society.

Bernard Clare, the subject of Farrell's first novel since 1941, has come to New York, at twenty-one, to defy his parents and be a writer. His preoccupations are girls, diffidence, scorn, the desire to be a writer, and hatred of all organized business. The novel shows Bernard trying to impress a girl in the New York Public Library; deeply but fruitlessly moved at the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti; at work for United Cigar, where he despises his co-workers and puts out the minimum possible effort; engaged in an affair with a married woman whom he torments with his scruples; selling advertising in Queens and, again, working only a fraction of the time; and finally living in the Y. M. C. A. and attempting to confuse the uplift of that organization by asking cynical questions. Bernard is callow, desperate, earnest, contemptible, unscrupulous. The anguish of youth is brilliantly, painfully portrayed. Bernard lives with shyness and desire every waking hour, and when he escapes from these pangs he questions the means by which he does so. No emotion or idea possesses him to the point of freeing him from self-doubt.

I have said that Farrell exhibits the influence of environment on his characters. Yet he makes no pretense of "demonstrating" scientifically *why* events occur; rather his prime concern is to get inside the mind of his hero and show how the world appears to him, to render fully and accurately the quality of living as Bernard experiences it. The notion that Bernard is dominated by his environment is conveyed because Farrell shows him always as steeped in his immediate milieu: every thought, almost, has reference to the scene and situation in which he finds himself. If Bernard is to meditate on failure and the chance of his becoming a pitiful bum, it will be because (and when) he is approached in the park by a pitiful old Bohemian drunk who boasts of his talent. If he despises business, it is when he is listening to businessmen talking business. When Sacco and Vanzetti are executed, Bernard goes to Union Square and is caught up in a surge of proletarian defiance. Thus thought springs so directly from a concrete situation that the dependence is established. The character's mind is a perpetual turning mirror of the physical scene. This is a main source of the tremendous vigor of Farrell's writing; it is always anchored in the concrete. Less ironic than *Ellen Rogers,* less subjective than the Danny O'Neill tetralogy, *Bernard Clare* is most rigorously concerned with the personality of the protagonist.

Farrell's writing reveals that he has suffered guilt for what many people accept as natural. It seems to be established that most of most people's time finds them in reverie or in a state of comfortable mindlessness. Even the gifted and the profound do not "think" very often or very long. Insights come and are worried slowly into form. Most people, however, do not think at all after they have reached maturity. Farrell's young

men—Danny O'Neill, and now Bernard—suffer with their reveries. They do not sit quietly and stare. They yearn. They suffer anguish of spirit. They feel TIME rushing terribly by. I think this guilt tires them, and it becomes a more or less constant element of their consciousnesses. Farrell has rendered this feeling with painful and wonderful reality. His doing so, however, raises a question—perhaps a fundamental question—as to the exact nature of the "reality" with which Farrell is dealing in this novel.

To be more specific, one does not know just what *Bernard Clare* is saying. Bernard is a fool and a scoundrel—but *is* he? He wants to write, if we are to judge from the facts given, in order to be able to sneer at Babbittry. Does this make him contemptible, or does it reveal that most writers' (and therefore most people's) motives are "lower" than we like to suppose? I suspect that neither is true but that Farrell, impelled by a characteristic sense of guilt, is drawing on the most ignoble motives of his own past. We all acknowledge Thoreau's sentence, "I never knew, and never shall know, a worse man than myself," as a just verdict. Whitman makes the same confession ("The wolf, the snake, the hog, not wanting in me,") in order to establish contact with Everyman. Do we not all despise ourselves? But do we get at Truth by exposing the hog and the snake in ourselves? Just where is the truth to be found between the best and the worst? If Bernard is to become a good writer, he will have had qualities which are not revealed in this novel. If he is to be just a heel, honestly tormented but still a heel, then we should not be nagged by the suspicion that Bernard is somehow an "important" person. He reads voraciously, but he is not shown often thinking of what he has read.

Every reader of *Bernard Clare* will be able to identify beneath his own respectable exterior impulses considerably more vicious than Bernard is credited with—and yet realize that he considers himself "superior" to Bernard. This paradoxical situation is to be explained not by the stupidity of the reader but by the fact that characterization in the novel is *highly* artificial, representational, conventionalized, and symbolic. Characters in novels are presented in terms of an established convention. They are not photographed, nor are they truly portrayed, if by truly we mean exactly. Writers almost without exception represent real men by dealing with traits, motives, and qualities that are several degrees more interesting, worthy, and able than those of the actual people they represent. We all know this, or we should not dare, for example, to condemn Hamlet's mother as morally insensate—since most of us have, under pressure of circumstances, acted far more ignobly than Gertrude. I believe Farrell plays fast and loose with this almost universal convention of characterization. Hence the ambiguity: for with reference to the convention Bernard is despicable, whereas with reference to actuality he is "better" than the average pious citizen. And thus Farrell, oscillating between these two poles, can demand credit for fearless truthfulness because he reveals so much of the hog and the snake in Bernard and in the next breath can accuse of hypocrisy anyone who presumes to consider Bernard an inferior person.

It would be platitudinous to say that art has always consciously idealized its materials. It has done so, I suppose, because man lives so constantly with his lower nature that he wants, in art, to study his rare best self in patterns of beauty and virtue. This is the source of the convention to which I have referred. It is also true that this convention has always spread a virus of delusion for which it has been treated by the perennial ministrations of literary radicals. The convention was pretty inane when the early naturalists swung into action, but they were working *on* the convention. Let it never be supposed that they were attempting to transfer the bare and stinking actuality of life into the novel.

Farrell lives on after the early assault of his cohorts has succeeded in greatly modifying the convention in the direction of actuality. Since any work lives in reference to the current tradition, Dreiser's last book punches at air, and what would have been vigor in 1900 is now without meaning because so many other writers have gone further. Farrell is confronted with the same problem in another frame. He is no longer in the historical context of c. 1930 whence his magnificent *Studs Lonigan* emerged. The values of revolt must be superseded by values of insight made possible by the achievement of the naturalists. To emphasize Bernard's "lower" characteristics is to slip into the ambiguity of

pushing against something that is no longer there in the same form to push against. Writers today are abundantly aware of the hoggish and snakelike elements that Anthony Trollope barely brushed. With Trollope the convention was drawing graciously and exquisitely far from actuality. But the Cains and O'Haras have changed all that. Heaven forbid that Mr. Farrell should wear rosy glasses, but I wonder whether Bernard's intellectual pursuits and aspirations might not be more richly presented without doing violence to actuality or Truth. Real experience is not measured by time but by intensity, and one insight may mean more in a man's life than a thousand hours of reverie or desperation.

The effect of Bernard Clare seems to be, in part, to convey the affirmation that its subject matter is important because it is true, with the further implication that its importance is proportional to its truth. This affirmation reveals the ambiguity I have defined between actuality and the literary convention. Farrell is a good enough writer to work through this problem which has come clearly to focus in *Bernard Clare.*

RICHMOND LATTIMORE:

Three Poets from across the Water

DENIS DEVLIN: *Lough Derg and Other Poems.* Reynal & Hitchcock.
JOHN WALLER: *Crusade.* Macmillan.
HENRY TREECE: *Collected Poems.* Knopf.

These three very different books of poetry may be reviewed together, not because all are "British"—one is Irish, one English, and one at least partly Welsh in origin—but because they embody, in their excellences and shortcomings, three separate tendencies which have been and are important in modern verse. Thus criticism applied to these works and not carried beyond them will still touch at one point or another a large segment of new poetry. There are not too many styles of perception or techniques for the elaboration of structure now being practised which are not in some way represented in one of these three volumes.

Of the three poets, Denis Devlin illustrates most extensively the manner, the failures, and the particular successes which characterize the bulk of good contemporary verse. He has the eye, the ear, and the hand of the true lyric poet; the heart of pity also ("Geneva: Anteroom," "Pays Conquis," "Bacchanal") which must be shown by any poet who will be respected in our generation; but he has not, or disowns, the informing authoritative intellect which imposes unity of design or meaning and carries it through the whole. There is always the chance of misinterpretation, but I would urge against Devlin (and so many others!) that the unity of a poem is not given simply from the togetherness of elements in the writer's mind, unless the clues that link them together are projected also; that these clues may be unobtrusive, even secret, but they must be there. Any poet has at least had to consider some such obvious propositions, but Devlin has ignored or defied them. The result of this in combination with his special talents is, generally, finesse of detail within a framework of confusion or triviality. These lines in "Encounter":

> Between the two of us, Francois from Touraine,
> Where women and the wheat ripen and fall due
> Suavely at evening

emerge from a short poem informed by sulky and unimportant prejudice. "Meditation at Avila," with its magnificences at and near the beginning, as:

> You shall see blue arches of emptiness marching
> into the horizon
> Over the yellow and black, the intolerant
> Excellency of the Castilian highlands
> All rock

wanders off through new series of images, some still imposing, to end in a frustration of self-pity. Strike into it almost anywhere and you will uncover splendors, but the total is disappointment. Sometimes detail collapses also, or fails to fuse. "Mixed Drinks" ends:

> A shabby-nosed old drunk
> Limns with one loyal, black-gloved hand
> The motions of a baton, orchestrating
> Out of the oxen heart
> The world, the flesh and the devil,
> The dare of the trumpets, ivied erosion of theme,
> Violin-shell of children.

This, like the whole poem, is choked with too many metaphors, none cogent because none are allowed to stand not jostled by the next products of the restless imagination. There is a similar effect in 'West Pier."

Devlin plays thus to the grandstand, but he is not insincere, unless it is in "Celibate Recusant" or in "Venus of the Salty Shell" with its inappropriate Athenians and fake excitements. Still, through some deliberate solution of rules, there is an effect of anarchy. The result is much fine writing and three really good poems: "Lough Derg," "Geneva: Anteroom," and "Annapolis."

John Waller is, by comparison, a traditionalist, not because of any dumpy conservatism, but because his verse is of the type, personal and modest, which may and does subsist in almost any historical circumstance, independently of it but without negation or withdrawal. He is always intelligible, though not always easy. Here generally is technical competence (a virtue more often attributed, sometimes with condescension, than held), though it occasionally lapses. In "Airman" the conception is magnificent, but the anapests that carry it are a little rickety. "Eros" is written in an indecisive metre, neither one thing nor another. Certain material faults are part-payment for the winning elsewhere of clear and reasonable beauty. The series "Crusade" is marked by a certain innocence, an obvious pushing of the point, which is not unattractive but drains some of the force. There are a few astonishing descents into bathos, for instance, the sociable style of the descriptive brochure, in "The Nieuw Amsterdam":

> It is easy to get lost in the corridors of this large ship
> Winding to light brown and cream.

Irony? If that, it is too well disguised. In "Farewell Seventeens" Waller is at his best:

> We're quit, we're free, may take what freedom yields.
> Jack's in the bank for forty-five long years,
> Paul takes insurances from door to door,
> Colin's gone planting in colonial fields,
> And Dick's a private in the engineers.
> These are our lives, where the conspirator?

Lucid, moving, complete, without being hackneyed. "Evening Poem," "Convoy," "For Peter Killed Flying," "Commando," "In Beirut" are as good, and each piece in the book is a whole poem.

Of the three, the most unlike others is Henry Treece, described as a personalist, though the term might better have suited Waller. The many poems in this collection, whether or not linked in series, seem all to be aspects of some directionless biography of the mind, building a world or half-world of its own; and this world is dominated from end to end by certain recurrent motifs, above all, the crucifixion and its attributes, then many minor figures, including Hamlet and his opposites, and the creatures of the fairy tale. Rich materials, but their use is not opulence, and the idea of the second coming generates neither terror nor radiance, but a world gray, harsh, and thin, through which we follow the persistent flagellation of what sometimes seems to be a straw man. A keynote could be selected out of "Towards a Personal Armageddon":

Yet came the dawn when jackal-coat I sloughed
And, compound with treachery, I moved with snake;
Two-wise I stepped, deceiving as I dealt,
Learning to live on lies and love the pit;
Was this the start, or page before the end?

The vocabulary reinforces this series of sensations and builds the atmosphere. Only extensive quotation could show how it is done, but here are certain favored words that recur again and again: bones, mole, adder, rats, pauper, sticks, twig, twitch, thatch, scarecrow, skull. Sonorous vowels, as bland and mellow words, are avoided, or, if forced, overwhelmed by the presence of harsh consonants:

In my brain
The future's noisy crotchet scratched a niche.

Sometimes the aspirates give us too much of a mouthful:

When dragon-prowed boats first thrust through their dream.

This deliberate desiccation may be drearily effective:

The haggard children creeping from
My hand's despair, turn eyes like dying flowers
To bid good-day: their wizened leaves of hands
Flutter like wings, and groan, and then lie still.

Bright and beautiful creatures appear, certainly. Thus, for instance:

But lay in the hands of angels, hands like claws

or thus:

the dry-drugged virgin,
The eyeless child with flowers in his claw.

At the end, it is true, Treece recognizes

The safety in a bowl of flowers

and asks forgiveness of clover, lilac, and poppy. It comes gracefully, for the nightmare domain through which we have ridden, though built up self-consciously and with occasional melodrama of phrase, is still weirdly memorable and impressive.

Something might be said about Treece's manipulations of rhyme and metre. Outright rhyme is generally avoided in favor of half-rhyme or assonance, best when consistent, sometimes awkwardly mixed with true rhyme. Internal assonance, freely used, will sometimes yield an annoying jingle:

Blood in the bud, born of the unicorn.

The erratic appearance of long or short lines in otherwise regular series of pentameters can frustrate the reader. It is worse when blank verse turns into jumping anapests:

In a world where the word is more strong than the thing,
Where the thing is a thought in a dead man's head

and then resumes blank verse. Such liberties—not new, of course, and now favored—may be essential to Treece's method, but seem more like device to avoid monotony and the obvious. English iambic is flexible enough not to need such assistance, and firm enough to resent it. The medium offers incomparable freedom, whose constant abuse by incompetents is easily understood, but whose treatment by anyone as able as Treece remains a puzzle.